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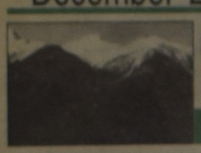

Looking to the hills ... p. 10

Treasures hidden in the darkness ..... p. 12

56th year of publication

Dutch government approves euthanasia guidelines

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WORLD BOOK

Alan Doerksen

BURLINGTON — The government of the Netherlands has legalized euthanasia. It has passed legislation to provide guidelines to physicians when carrying it out. Dutch and Canadian opponents of euthanasia are expressing their concern about the law, approved Nov. 28 by the Dutch lower house of parliament, which essentially legalizes what has been a long-standing practice in the Netherlands.

The Dutch parliament has set the following guidelines for euthanasia, according to the Associated press:

• The physician must be convinced the patient's request is voluntary and well-considered.

• The physician must be convinced the patient is facing unremitting and unbearable suffering, although he does not have to be terminally ill.

• The patient must have a correct and clear understanding of his situation and prognosis.

• The physician must reach the conclusion, together with the patient, that there is no reasonable alternative that is acceptable to the patient. The decision to die must be the patient's own.

• The physician must consult at least one other independent doctor who has examined the patient.

• The physician must carry out the termination of life in a medically appropriate manner.

The Dutch health minister who promoted the bill, Els Borst, said the goal was to bring physician-assisted suicide into the open so it could be more easily regulated and controlled. "Doctors should not be treated as criminals," she said. "This will create security for doctors and patients alike." Speaking to the Associated Press in The Hague after passage of the bill, she said, "Something as serious as ending one's life deserves openness."

Christian parties objected

The bill, which passed 104 to 40 over the objections of small Christian parties and the Catholic Church, now will be considered by the upper chamber, where approval is considered largely a formality, reports the *Washington Post*. The measure could take effect next year.

Dutch officials say the law is not intended to allow foreigners to come to the country seeking to die. The requirements for a close, long-term doctor-patient relationship would make that virtually impossible, they contend.

An earlier draft, which drew much criticism, would have allowed children as young as 12 to request euthanasia in certain cases without the consent of their parents. But that section was changed so that children age 12 to 15 would need consent of at least one parent. Young people 16 or older could opt for doctor-assisted suicide without parental consent, reports Religion Today.

The Christian Democrats (CDA), an opposition party, believe that the government "wants to reconcile the irreconcilable," by authorizing euthanasia when it is meant to "protect human life." The small Christian parties SGP and Christian Union have described the law as a "juridical monstrosity," reports the Zenit Catholic news agency.

The Dutch law makes it too easy for people to give up when they are ill and consider themselves a burden to their families, the Dutch Roman Catholic Church said, according to Religion Today.

"In the Netherlands, your life is no longer safe," Bert Dorenbos of the Dutch pro-life group Cry for Life told Reuters. "If doctors are not hesitating to kill people, then they will not hesitate to withdraw medical treatment from people they do not like."

Dorenbos said the move was "shocking, but confirmed in law what was already being done." He told the Internet news site CNSNews.com that his agency was challenging Christians around the world to act and pray, saying they were "much too quiet about this issue." In the Netherlands, he added, liberal churches supported euthanasia, and even Bible-believing churches strongly opposed to abortion seemed disinterested in this debate.

CRC against Dutch law

"The kind of legislation adopted in the Netherlands we would not want to have here," asserts Reinder Klein, the CRC's Church in Society Co-ordinator for Canada. The new legislation "formalized what has been practised for a long time," says Klein. "Given what I know about the Netherlands, it didn't come as a surprise to me."

Looking at the positive side of the new law, Klein says, "the Dutch government has enacted a piece of legislation which lays strict ground rules." But, on the other hand, "there isn't much of a control mechanism to make sure these rules are observed.... You can have lots of rules in place," he notes. But if courts do not uphold them, "you may as well not have rules."

In the past two decades, Dutch courts have tended not to prosecute or convict doctors who performed euthanasia, even though it was technically illegal.

"In Canada, we have practically no rules at the moment" dealing with end-of-life care and euthanasia, says Klein. "Our legislation hasn't paid much attention to that. Murder, of course, is clearly against the law." But there are no set rules outlining what types of medicine can be given to dying

See **KEEP** *page 2...*

Indonesia's Maluku islands brace for more attacks after massacre

INDONESIA (Newsroom) — Attacks on Christian villages by Muslim jihad warriors in Indonesia's eastern Maluku province have left more than 50 people dead, according to news reports. The most deadly attack came on the same day that provincial leaders were planning ways to stop further bloodshed during the upcoming religious holiday season, when sectarian attacks often are sparked.

A Maluku Protestant leader reported that 671 fleeing villagers from the Kairatu area of Seram island were captured, and 46 were slaughtered for refusing to convert to Islam in a November 28 attack. A national police spokesman confirmed the deaths, reported by Sammy Waileruni of the

See **ADVENTIST** *page 2...*

BAPTIST PRESS PHOTO BY WARREN F. JOHNSON

Twelve people on Indonesia's Maluku Islands were injured when Muslim paramilitary fighters fired on them as they fled their homes in a water taxi like this one. The people pictured above are refugees from Hative Besar, a Christian village attacked by extremists seeking to eliminate Christianity from the Malukus.

News

Keep euthanasia illegal, say doctors

... continued from page 1

people, he observes.

"It would be helpful for Canada to have clear rules — legislation that clearly supports the inestimable value of human life," Klein asserts. "Such legislation could certainly be helpful today in securing broader understanding and support for palliative care.

"What we in the CRC would support is much more attention in Canada to palliative care, and medical intervention aimed at a passing that is pain-free," says Klein. "As a denomination, we have taken a clear position that the intentional termination of a life, including assisted suicide, is not acceptable," he adds.

Klein says he would be "delighted" to see Christians in Canada speaking up against euthanasia. He was a co-author of the Committee for Contact with the Government's recent report, *Regarding Responsibility and Community at the End of Life*, which was enthusiastically endorsed by the CRC's Synod 2000. That paper mentioned, "Responsible medical practice needs to be guided by a deep respect for the God-given value of human life. This value is not diminished by the physical or mental ravages on old age, disease, accident or deformity. We must not terminate life on the basis of any of these things, for doing so places us on the slippery slope of treating life as a disposable commodity when its apparent usefulness is lost."

Doctors criticize law

Dr. Will Johnston, chairman of Euthanasia Prevention Coalition B.C., is critical of the new Dutch legislation, which he says "contains supposed safeguards which have failed in [the Netherlands] and elsewhere." The coalition is secular, but includes people of faith and medical professionals.

One of the guidelines says "the physician must be convinced the patient is facing unremitting and unbearable suffering," but Johnston asserts, "the definition of suffering is elastic."

The Dutch Health Minister's statement that the law would make euthanasia more easy to regulate is "a ludicrous argument," insists Johnston. "If euthanasia is a bad idea it's a bad idea no matter how well-documented it is."

In Canada, says Johnston, "we have laws against murder and assisted suicide. These are durable laws which have protected the frail." But he contends that Canadians "have to improve palliative care. We have to strengthen the defence of the disabled community against arbitrary refusal of care."

Canadian Physicians for Life has also expressed opposition to the Dutch law. "The Netherlands has gone from euthanasia for terminal illness to chronic illness to psychological distress to no illness at all," states the agency in a press release. "A doctor in [the Netherlands] was recently acquitted for killing an elderly man who was 'tired of life' but had no mental or physical illness.... According to a February 1999 report in the *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 20 per cent of Dutch euthanasia cases are done without the patient's request, and 60 per cent of euthanasia cases were not reported."

Canadian Physicians for Life asserts, "The only acceptable safeguard is to keep euthanasia illegal. Once the door to legalized killing is opened, there will be no way to stop it."

The agency notes that "Senate hearings earlier this year strongly urged the Canadian government to provide improved end-of-life care." A 1995 Senate report, which was re-examined by a Senate subcommittee this year, "recommended that Criminal Code prohibitions on active euthanasia and assisted suicide be maintained."

Euthanasia becoming more common in other countries

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — The Netherlands is setting a precedent by adopting a very liberal euthanasia law, but some other countries already tolerate euthanasia to a high degree, even though their governments do not have an open-door policy on the issue.

In Sweden, to "assist in suicide" is not a crime punishable by law. In extreme cases, a doctor can shut down a respiratory machine.

Euthanasia is illegal in the United Kingdom. However, in 1993 and 1994, the justice system authorized some doctors to end the life of patients kept alive artificially. A patient in Scotland in 1996 was "authorized to die," reports Zenit.

The French government Committee of Ethics in Medicine and Biology (CCNE) last March opened the door to the possibility of euthanasia in "exceptional" cases. The committee, which is the highest consultative body in France on ethical questions in medicine and biology, listed as exceptional cases those in which pain cannot be controlled.

In the United States, federal law prohibits euthanasia. Since 1994, Oregon is the only state that allows euthanasia. It allows it for terminally ill patients if a formal application is presented. In April 1996, the second U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which has jurisdiction over New York, Vermont and Connecticut, authorized medical euthanasia.

In May 1997, the Constitutional Court in Colombia allowed euthanasia for patients in the terminal phase, who specifically requested it, reports Zenit.

China allows hospitals to practice euthanasia for incurable patients in their terminal phase.

Euthanasia common in Australia

In 1996 in Australia, the Parliament of the Northern Territories voted on a law to legalize euthanasia. But the law was abrogated at the federal level a few months later.

A recent survey done by researchers at Monash University, in Clayton, Australia, compared the practice of euthanasia in that country compared with the Netherlands.

According to the results, Australian doctors intentionally hasten the death of twice as many patients as their Dutch colleagues and are far less likely to discuss their decisions with their patients or to seek their consent. The Australian figure, based on a confidential national survey of 3000 doctors, suggests that almost 30 per cent of deaths in that country occur after doctors decide to intentionally hasten their patients' deaths.

The survey found that incidents of non-voluntary euthanasia (deaths resulting from administering drugs explicitly intended to end patients' lives without their consent) were five times higher in Australia than in the Netherlands. "I wasn't expecting the rate of non-voluntary euthanasia to be so much higher in Australia, but the result doesn't totally surprise me," says Helga Kuhse, one of the authors of the research.

"Our findings undermine suggestions that allowing euthanasia to be practised openly makes it more likely that doctors will end patients' lives without their consent," Kuhse says.

Dr. Will Johnston, chairman of Euthanasia Prevention Coalition B.C. and secretary-treasurer of Canadian Physicians for Life, calls the 30 per cent finding "totally absurd.... That's a puffed-up claim.... I would be very suspicious of that claim."

Commenting on euthanasia in Australia, Reinder Klein, the CRC Canadian Ministries Board's Church in Society Co-ordinator, says, "What I fear is that in Australia, as in the Netherlands, and probably elsewhere as well, the cost issue and precarious state of healthcare are going to determine end-of-life treatment." Most healthcare costs come in the last few years of a person's life, and when healthcare resources are limited, some people might decide "to pull the plug on people who are going anyway," he says.

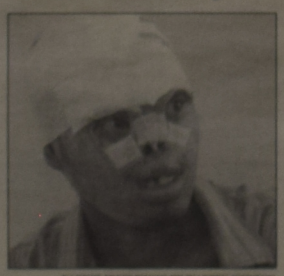
Adventist churches destroyed in Maluku

... continued from page 1

Maranatha church in the provincial capital Ambon, but denied that any forced conversions took place. Brigadier-General Saleh Saaf said the incident began when a Muslim group attacked the Christians, but "victims came from both parties."

Waileruni, a lawyer with the joint Christian co-ordination post at Maranatha church, reported earlier that four villages in the Gorong area of Seram island were razed by Muslim warriors from surrounding islands on November 24, killing eight and chasing 3,000 villagers into the forests. The co-ordination post was established by churches to help them contend with the attacks. Seventh-day Adventist leaders in Indonesia report that one of their churches was destroyed in the attack in Kairatu, which is about three hours by boat from Ambon.

Since January 1999, an estimated 15 Adventists have been killed and 12 Adventist churches have burned in the sectarian violence. Reinhold Kesaulya, president of the Adventist church's East Indonesian Union Conference, said he received a call on November 28 from a distressed church elder in Galala on Ambon island.



BAPTIST PRESS PHOTO BY WARREN JOHNSON

Frendy Nunemete's face was severely burned as he tried to escape a house set afire by heavily armed attackers last June. The village's defenders — including Frendy's brother, who was killed — were immediately overrun. "I don't know why they did this," Frendy rasped. "I don't understand why we are being killed. I'm just thankful to God that I am still alive."

"While crying on the phone, he told me that our members are suffering for lack of food," Kesaulya said in a church news report. "They cannot go out from their homes since there are snipers ready to shoot."

Two years of violence across the province has killed 4,000 people and chased more than 500,000 from their homes. Since May, thousands of Muslim jihad warriors trained elsewhere in the country have entered the region with the expressed aim of eradicating Christians. According to the British-based human rights group Christian Solidarity Worldwide, radical Muslims have vowed that there will not be any church bells ringing in Ambon by Christmas.

Maluku is one of the few areas of Muslim-majority Indonesia where the number of people who identify as Christian is about the same as Muslims. Indonesia authorities declared a civil emergency in the region earlier this year to try to quell the violence. The *Jakarta Post* reported that Maluku officials met November 28 to plan ways to prevent clashes they believe could be sparked by upcoming religious holidays, including those that mark the end of the 30-day Muslim fasting period Ramadan, which began in late November.

Maluku Governor Saleh Latuconsina said he will place soldiers and police in potential trouble spots. "Mass mobilization by the warring groups must be anticipated," Latuconsina told the *Post*. "We will make sure that mosques and churches are safe from any troublemakers." Many Malukans have expressed fear that violence would erupt ahead of the Muslim holidays celebrating the end of Ramadan on December 27 and 28.

News/Politics

Clinton fails to confront Vietnam over brutal repression of Christians

Mark Kelly

WASHINGTON (BP) — On the eve of President Bill Clinton's historic mid-November trip to Vietnam, a religious freedom advocate dropped a bombshell — 50 pages of secret Vietnamese government documents detailing oppressive policies against Christians.

And although Clinton gently raised human rights issues while in Vietnam, he failed to confront the government over its brutal repression of Vietnamese Christians, said Nina Shea of the Center for Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C.

BAPTIST PRESS

Persecution has caused Vietnam's church to grow — the opposite of what the government intended.

Secret documents

A week before Clinton's Nov. 16 departure, Shea released the secret documents, which include instructions for controlling churches, a policy against group Bible studies and a policy forbidding people to listen to foreign religious broadcasts.

"These documents are the smoking gun," Shea said. "They show that church closures, arrests and Bible burnings are not isolated acts of overzealous cadres but are the policy directives of the Vietnamese Communist Party and state religious officials. They give the lie to Vietnam government claims that the state has liberalized religious freedom in recent years."

Clinton's three-day visit to Vietnam — the first by a United States president in 31 years — was intended to foster reconciliation and open trade channels with the former enemy. But Clinton also met with the Roman Catholic archbishop of Ho Chi Minh City and mentioned religious freedom in a nationally televised address at Hanoi National University.

Those gestures reportedly annoyed officials of a government that severely persecutes and harasses members of the country's rapidly growing Christian churches.

Clinton's meeting with the archbishop "is an obvious statement that America cares about more than trade," Shea said. However, Clinton could have taken more direct action, such as asking about political prisoners or attending a church service, she said.

Though Clinton's delegation included 50 business leaders, he did not bring along a religious freedom expert from his own State Department.

Since late July, Vietnam's government has been jamming gospel radio broadcasts in two dialects of the country's Hmong minority, according to Far East Broadcasting Company. Though Christian radio broadcasts have aired across the country for years, an exploding church-planting movement among the Hmong has caused the government concern.

Protestant grew fivefold

Countrywide, the number of Protestant Christians is believed to have grown fivefold to about 800,000 in the 25 years since the communist takeover. Roman Catholics number at least 5 million.

President Clinton restored normal diplomatic relations with Vietnam in 1995. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom lists the country as one in which religious freedom is "severely repressed."

Advocates for persecuted Christians say Vietnam is holding as many as 40 Protestant church leaders in prisons or re-education camps. According to **Persecutedchurch.org**, government security forces frequently harass believers, subjecting them to brutal interrogation, heavy fines, imprisonment and hard labor.

One Hmong Christian, Lu Seo Dieu, reportedly died in prison in 1999 from mistreatment and lack of medical care. Two others, Nguyen Thi Thuy and Dinh Troi, were arrested and jailed in 1999 for their church activities.

As is often the case, persecution has caused Vietnam's church to grow — the opposite of what the government intended. For example, evangelist Ha Seing was arrested and brutally beaten in 1996 for sharing the gospel among his Koho people group. When he miraculously recovered from his injuries, 50 people in his village opened their hearts to Christ.

The government also has been criticized for repression of other faith groups. In March, authorities forcibly prevented at least 2 million Hoa Hao Buddhists from assembling at their sect founder's birthplace.

Determination to frustrate religious freedom

The government proved its determination to frustrate religious freedom during Clinton's nationally televised speech, according to Reuters news service. Clinton's remarks gently urged the government to consider opening up its political system and strengthening respect for human rights. But each time Clinton touched on human rights, the translator garbled his comments.

In recent years, the cause of persecuted Christians has gained a higher profile among evangelical Christians, said Steve Haas of **Persecutedchurch.org**. An estimated 300,000 churches in 130 countries participated in his organization's fifth annual International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, held Nov. 12.

Deadlock 2000: the mini-series

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

July 1995
Hollywood, California

Dear Mr. Murchison:

We regret to inform you that we cannot use your script for a new television miniseries titled, "Deadlock 2000," set five years in the future. True, the plot is imaginative, as is your suggestion that it take the form of a musical. Here once again is a summary of your proposal:

Two candidates for the U.S. presidency, to be played by Harrison Ford and Tom Hanks, are in a tightly contested race for the White House. On election night the race is a dead heat, with Ford narrowly ahead of Hanks in electoral votes, but with Hanks slightly ahead in the popular vote. The race comes grinding to a halt in Florida, whose voters are evenly divided between the two candidates, as the audience hears Natalie Cole singing "Undecided."

The television networks twice erroneously call the election, first giving Florida to Ford and then to Hanks, before admitting it is too close to call. In an amusing plot twist, the first person at a major network to hand a premature victory to Ford is a cousin of his. In a second plot twist, the governor of Florida, to be played by Jerry Seinfeld, is Ford's brother. Furthermore, Ford's father (Ed Asner) had himself once been president. After hearing initially that he has lost the election, Hanks phones Ford to concede, only to call back an hour later singing a lively rendition of "They Can't Take That Away from Me." Ford responds by singing "I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'," until his lawyers remind him that he's still ahead in the state's popular vote.

'It Ain't Necessarily So'

Because state law mandates a recount in a close race, armies of workers carrying huge boxes of ballots on their shoulders trudge wearily onto the set singing, "Que Será Será: Whatever Will Be Will Be." As the recounts show Ford to be ahead by only 57½ votes, Hanks eyes the results suspiciously and sings, "It Ain't Necessarily So."

In the midst of all this, the current and soon to be former president, played by Tom Cruise, sits in the Oval Office singing "Ain't Misbehavin'," while his soon to be ex-wife is off on the campaign trail singing "New York, New York."

As the weeks wear on, and following numerous court rulings, gleeful lawyers on both sides gather for a rousing chorus of "We're in the Money." At the very end, the difference between the two candidates narrows to a single vote. In the final scene the camera pans in for a shot of a resident at a seniors' home in Fort Lauderdale, whose single vote is decisive in winning the election for – who? Well, that's the cliff-hanger. In any event, the resident wishes he had voted for Ralph Nader, and the credits roll as he sings, "If I Only Had a Brain."

Nixon not presidential enough

As I said, Mr. Murchison, we cannot use your idea. To begin with, your suggestion that we dub Marni Nixon's singing voice for the unmusical Ford and Hanks sounds good in theory. Ms. Nixon certainly did a wonderful job more than three decades ago, when she sang for Natalie Wood in "West Side Story" and Audrey Hepburn in "My Fair Lady." But, in our considered opinion, her voice does not sound sufficiently presidential.

Apart from that, and above all, the plot is too implausible. Even a fictional story has to have some measure of credibility, and yours simply does not.

Thank you, all the same, for bringing your proposal to our attention, and we wish you better luck with the other studios.

Yours truly, &c.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, and gave up a promising career in comedy writing some years ago.

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Editorial

The road from Bethlehem

Harry der Nederlanden

When I was in grade three or four, along with the children of our church I participated in a Christmas program in which each of us recited an Old Testament passage that looked ahead to the coming of the Messiah. The program of lessons and carols broadcast from Cambridge, England every year on Christmas follows a similar format. Bible teachers often draw a tipped hour-glass shape to illustrate how the broad stream of history and all the expectations of humanity come to a focus in this single child, Jesus of Nazareth. The genealogies of Matthew and Luke, too, prompt us to follow this channeled story line that culminates in the birth of the Promised One.

Stories that don't reflect well on Israel

Without the earlier stories, without this long period of preparation, we would not be able to understand who this child — this man – was and is. Mankind needed to be taught, gradually and in a multitude of ways and modes, who this God who is our Father is, and by extension who we, his people, are. The Bible is not just a chronology of conquering kings and heroes, of the founding fathers of the Israelite nation, or of people who model what it means to be a righteous person. It includes all sorts of stories that do not reflect well on Israel, on God's chosen people. Other nations tended to weed such stories out of the accounts of their origins; they censored those stories that did not model the traits that made them strong and prosperous.

Many of the episodes included in Scripture are an embarrassment to the unfolding of God's self-revelation in and through his people. They seem to be poor illustrations of divine sovereignty and purpose; more often than not they serve better as illustrations of God's ineffectiveness in carrying out his plans.

A wrestling match

The biblical God and the biblical story do not proceed according to our expectations. We tend to schematize biblical history rather neatly because that's how we learn and remember. Reading the Bible attentively and obediently, however, remains difficult; it's a wrestling match. A health magazine I glanced at carried the advice to read something from Scripture every night before going to bed because it would soothe and relax you and help you fall into a peaceful, salubrious sleep. The Bible as a sedative?

Yes, the Bible does speak comfort and peace; it does promise happiness, joy, blessing. In their efforts to arouse us to act, some forms of Christian activism almost lose sight of this. Scripture itself does not choose one theme over the other. Yet, the serene scenes of mother and child among curious animals and of shepherds gazing up into a host of dazzling angels singing "Peace on earth and mercy mild" quickly give way to those of wailing mothers, their baby boys slaughtered by Herod's butchers and of fugitive parents fleeing the country to save their child.

As they flee from Bethlehem – meaning "House of Bread"— to Egypt, Joseph and Mary follow a route traced again and again in Scripture. This is the road followed much earlier by Jacob's sons as they struck out beyond the borders of the Promised Land looking for bread to feed their families. They in turn were following the same path along which Joseph had been dragged, wounded, betrayed by his own brothers, sold into slavery. The same path that the descendants of the brothers, now an abused race of slaves, followed as they fled from bondage to liberty. Shortly after his birth, angelic light still dazzling our eyes, we see the long-awaited Messiah, the hope and light of Israel, fleeing along this same route – from his birthplace to the safety of Egypt, the house of bondage, the land of the divine Pharaohs.

A bitter laugh

The Bible writers, it seems, love irony. No, God loves irony. Either way we say it may suggest that this is just a way of telling a story. Irony results when expected outcomes are turned topsy-turvy. When we see the 'Holy Family' retracing Israel's liberation route in reverse, it extorts from us a bitter laugh of...what? Recognition?

This is irony not as a trick of storytelling. This is the irony summed up by the placard nailed above the cross: King of the Jews. It is an irony bred in heart and bone marrow, in the shacks of the poor as well as the mansions of the rich, in the dreams of the dispossessed as well as in the ambitions of the great. One day the road to freedom points one way; the next, the other way. One day it is the road of hope; the next, the road of tears.

I wonder: when Jesus broke bread with his befuddled disciples at Emmaus (reminding them that he himself is the bread of life) and explained the Scriptures to them, did he retell the story of Joseph and his brethren?

Joseph the dreamer, spoiled, self-centred son of a doting father. His dreams and his father's favoritism make him hated. Instead of becoming the centre of his family circle as he dreamt, he is spewed out, cast away like refuse.

Before this, all roads in the family story, it seemed, led to the Promised Land. Now, suddenly the fabric unravels. A wild, but golden thread, flies off into the desert, into a land of strange gods.

God has faithfully led Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to the land of Canaan, where they have settled down to multiply and become the people of the covenant. Their expectations and identity are fashioned by the covenantal promises of God himself. Here, at a crucial point in their history, however, famine forces them to look outside their boundaries to Egypt for survival, for their daily bread.

At the very birth of Israel as a nation, when the men whose names will name the tribes of Israel are ready to fill and subdue the land, the Lord drives them out of their homeland to find their salvation in Egypt. To them it must have looked as if the gods of Egypt were more powerful than the God of their fathers.

Prime Minister of Bread

In Egypt they discover that God was one step ahead of them. What irony: the one they rejected becomes their savior. The egocentric dream comes true. The slave has become a virtual king. They find their brother Joseph installed as the Prime Minister of Bread and they are saved....

Saved? Another irony. They settle in Egypt as privileged relatives of the savior of Egypt, but a few generations later they are toiling night and day to raise gigantic monuments to the divinity of the latest and greatest of the Pharaohs.

We all know the dramatic story of the exodus. It became the central story of Israel's Scripture, the one God uses to identify himself when he gives them the Ten Commandments: "I am the Lord your God who led you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

It is this same God who now leads his own son back down this same long trail of tears and hopes, back into the land of slavery. Behind him, there is no promised land, no homeland; he is fleeing because the 'powers that be' of his homeland are seeking to kill him. Irony of ironies, he is forced to seek refuge in the land of slavery.

Contemporary thinkers seeking to describe post-modernism often speak of irony, discontinuity, frustrated expectations, reversals. Scriptural revelation knows of much deeper ironies. It knows that the road of hopes, dreams and great expectations is also the road of tears, the *via dolorosa*. But it also knows that the Lord himself, he who is the ultimate horizon and container of all our deepest desires, even of those we cannot utter, traveled that road into the outer darkness, mirror of our inner darkness, and that the darkness could not prevail against him.

He came and still comes to his own, and too often we still do not recognize him. He who fled into the darkness from our violence is the light of the world. He who fled from the House of Bread is the Bread of Life. He was made darkness and a slave that we might be children of light and liberty. This we know, not by virtue of wisdom or clever exegesis, but by the Spirit of God who testifies with our spirit that we are heirs of God. We know we are heirs of God because we find ourselves on the same road, sharing in his suffering that we may also share in his glory.

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Letters

An Australian view of ecumenism

The Antonides-Vandervelde exchange about the World Council of Churches raises important issues. I read the debate as an outsider to North America. If the CRCNA joins the WCC, there will be an impact "down under" (i.e. in Australia and New Zealand), just as decisions in other North American spheres have significant impacts. But this debate is important because it is about what we mean by "ecumenism". The difficulty of making one's own understanding of "ecumenism" clear to one's fellow Christians is part of the problem.

To give an example of my difficulty: when I read the exchange the first thing that hit me was that a Canadian reformed readership should already know that a biblically-directed "reformed ecumenism" must involve consideration of Christian action in Canadian society.

But if the discussion about principles of ecumenical action is somehow limited to church-ecumenism — i.e., whether the CRCNA should or should not join the WCC — then in my view "reformational ecumenism" in its true sense has dropped from view.

When the trumpet sounds

Christian action in the non-church spheres of society loses its distinctive integrity when it is assumed that it is only ever possible when churches, or inter-church bodies, take the lead, or as David Martin, the British sociologist, aptly puts it "when the archepiscopal trumpet sounds". My problem with the WCC ideology is, first and foremost, with its assumption that Christian ecumenism is first of all a matter of church co-operation, and for the rest we should happily accommodate with whatever is defined as "progressive", " liberal" or "radical".

Reformational ecumenism "of the non-church type" is just as important as ecumenism which brings churches together on local, glocal and international levels. And when we consider WCC ecumenism we should also become aware of the non-church "ecumenism" it promotes.

WCC can hardly be avoided

Of course, the WCC can hardly be avoided. But it is not just an inter-church council; it supports and is supported by various political and industrial movements. In other Old Commonwealth countries, for example — Australia, New Zealand and South Africa — the policies and impact of National Councils of Churches have to be understood and respected by any Christians who would enter public debate. Church-sponsored impact, espousing policies written by clergy and laity with professional qualifications and expertise, might produce traditions of Christian social reflection for the political or industrial arenas, but Harry Antonides is right to point out that WCC ideology has been quite explicit in its adherence to an accommodation with modern humanism.

When some high-ranking WCC/NCC aficionados change from modernism to advocating post-modernism they may start to re-introduce the bible and biblical motifs into their rhetoric. But the question still remains as to whether the policies being promoted truly give expression to a biblically-directed world-view.

Distinctive Christian industrial insight is often missing from WCC policies because they are indistinguishable from various socialist, liberal-socialist or libertarian perspectives. It is also these options that dominate in their university faculties where Christian students can still be found who are sincere in their desire to develop a biblically-based view of industrial relations.

This is another good enough reason why discussion about ecumenism and the WCC should also consider the Christian task of forming labor unions and political associations. Many Christian workers around the world who know that their first priority is to honor God often confront work-place situations where they can do little else than align themselves with WCC industrial programs. This then often involves support for explicitly socialist, occasionally Christian-socialist, ideologies. But without any non-church Christian alternative to WCC ecumenism in the industrial sphere, what option is there? I might add that reformational Christians should have long embraced the need for a sustained tradition of a biblically-directed industrial relations theory which is internationally sensitive to assist workers across the globe.

Christian labor unions around the world honor the office of the Christian laborer, the one to whom God has given an important and distinct industrial responsibility. Such organisations introduce new dynamic possibilities into the Christian worker's life, encouraging sisters and brothers in Christ to work together on a variety of complex matters that arise from their daily work. They are an indication of what ecumenism in non-church matters involves.

Antonides and Vandervelde are two seasoned debaters. Their views need to be considered carefully and respectfully. But as the debate unfolds the possibility of a reformed biblically-directed ecumenism in industry and politics should also surely come into view.

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Evangelical critics of WCC a minority

I would like to make a brief response to George Vandervelde's comments on my critical article about the World Council of Churches (CC, October 30,2000).

1. Vandervelde writes that I should not have relied exclusively on one document of the WCC. I did not; I also considered many other sources, but I focused on the "Understanding and Vision" document because it is the result of more than eight years of intensive reflection and is described as a "charter" for the 21st century. One chapter is devoted to the WCC's " self-understanding ..., fundamentally by explication its constitutional Basis...." It seems to me that it is not unreasonable to assume that such a document is representative of the basis and purpose of the WCC.

The yardstick is different

2. Vandervelde says that the yardstick for evaluating a " fellowship" of churches, such as the WCC, is different from what we may expect (ask) from a confessionally Reformed church. I agree, as I stated in my article. But it seems to me that every ecumenical effort must at the very least be based on agreement about the fundamentals of the faith, beginning with a deep respect for the authority of the Bible and for the unique character of the church. On both counts the shoe pinches, despite the basis statement of the WCC.

3. The "Understanding" document speaks about the duty of member churches to help each other "to be faithful to the gospel" and to question one another if "any member is perceived to move away from the fundamentals of the faith or obedience to the gospel."(3.7.2) I suspect that no liberal church, e.g., the United Church of Canada, has any fear of being warned about the dangers of apostasy by the official leadership of the WCC. On the contrary.

4. Vandervelde is right in saying that there are other than liberal voices involved with the WCC. I believe that some of them, including Vandervelde himself, are seriously grappling with being true to its basis statement. That's why I made clear that my criticism was aimed at the overall "leadership and direction"of this organization. But in my view the more orthodox and biblically faithful statements and studies are not part of the WCC mainstream. I respect those who want to redirect the WCC into a more biblical way, but they do not determine the direction of this organization. In fact, those who criticize the WCC from the inside often express their frustration about the refusal of the Geneva head office to pay attention.

5. It is impossible to do justice to this large topic in a brief rejoinder. I would therefore urge the readers to read and investigate for themselves. Read the WCC material, much of which can easily be obtained from its own website. Another good up-to-date source is the 1997 book of the current WCC general secretary, Konrad Raiser, *To be the Church: Challenges and Hopes for a New Millennium*. But also read the thoughtful critics who have done a good job of examining the WCC and its advocacy of a modern reinterpretation of the Bible, accompanied by a political activism that sees no enemies on the left.

Finally, is it not ironic that voices are being raised in our church that call for joining the WCC at a time when we are losing members because they detect a surrender to the spirit of modernism in our own ranks. I do not agree with their decision to leave. But instead of flirting with a very questionable worldwide ecumenism, perhaps we should begin to pay attention to their warning and look for ways to heal the rifts that have occurred in our own family of churches right in our own backyard. Just a closing thought.

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The Savior as entertainment

Anne van Arragon Hutten

On December 6th I attended a Frank Mills concert, part of this musician's farewell tour across Canada. I came to this event largely unaware of Mills' place in musical history, not knowing that he was the composer of "The Music Box Dancer" and "Love me, Love me, Love," both of which I have heard many times. And so it was a surprise to discover a talented pianist with a gift for mimicking famous composers and the ability to charm an audience of two thousand fans.

Throughout his farewell tour, Mills has been working with local choirs at the various locations in which he performs. In the Annapolis Valley it was the Kings Chorale, directed by a local schoolteacher, which had the honor of singing along with him and his backup team. These local musicians are good, and with my lifelong Reformed background in choral music I would have preferred to hear more of them and less of the tinkly, high octave elaborations heard from Mills.

Christmas music co-opted

It's not really Frank Mills I want to write about, however, nor the comparative value of choral music versus one brand of piano music. What stayed with me from this concert, hugely enjoyed by so many people if the applause was a true indication, was the way Christmas music has been co-opted by the secular entertainment world.

This, of course, should not have come as a surprise. It's impossible to enter a mall after November 15 without being induced to buy, buy, buy! to the tune of "Joy to the World" and "Away in a Manger". Performing artists across the western world release Christmas records where Silent Night and Jingle Bells form one slick medley. Loudspeakers on every corner of towns and cities blare out carols like so much blasphemous litter.

Still, I was disturbed by this concert. Mills, judging by this single event only, appeared to revel in his own fame. Nowhere was there a Soli Deo Gloria. The anecdotes he told about his life in music were designed to enhance his reputation; the comparisons of his own music to famous composers of the past — Chopin, Brahms, Beethoven — were, if slightly satirical, also self-aggrandizing. That too was to be expected. What bothered me was the casual way in which words like "Christ the Savior is born" were belted out and tossed aside. "Dreaming of a White Christmas" received the same emphasis as "I's the B'y" (with accordion accompaniment) on the one hand, and "Little Town of Bethlehem" on the other.

"It's been fun", Mills said of his career, several times during the program, and with little conviction. "O Holy Night" was fun. Going fishing with his grandchildren was fun. "O Come all ye Faithful" was fun. Getting tanked up on beer in the middle of a river was fun.

Hymns become old-time favorites

When "Amazing Grace" becomes an old time favorite rather than the Almighty's work in the hearts of sinners, we have a problem. When the Savior's birth passes for popular entertainment, it's time for believers to ask questions of themselves and of the society around them. When Nova Scotia Symphony performs Handel's *Messiah*, even then there are messages "from our sponsors"; the Savior as marketable commodity.

Somewhere, somehow, we haven't done our job. We haven't told the folks around us that this Babe of Bethlehem actually is the Son of the Almighty God. Yes, that one, the one who saves sinners. You and me. If we take him seriously.

Gutenberg Bible goes online

LONDON (ZENIT.org) — The Gutenberg Bible is now on the Internet in full for the first time, BBC reported: see **www.bl.uk/**

The British Library has collaborated with Japanese researchers to provide electronic versions of two of the 15th-century Bibles to improve access to scholars around the world, without damaging the originals.

The library has two complete copies of the Gutenberg Bible — one printed on paper, the other on vellum — and putting them online will make it easier for scholars to compare the two.

UNITED PRESS INT

Johannes Gutenberg

Spy satellite technology

Ten researchers and technical experts from Tokyo's Keio University and from Japanese telecoms company NTT spent two weeks in the British Library to digitize the pages — bringing with them technology originally designed for spy satellites, BBC said.

In the mid-fifteenth century Johann Gutenberg invented a way of mechanizing the production of printing type, as distinct from individually engraved or cast letters. This was the beginning of the mass production of books. The Gutenberg Bible was printed in Mainz around 1454-5. It is the first major book printed in the West.

The digital images can be compared more easily than the physical books themselves. The possibility of comparing the two copies is valuable because no two copies of the Gutenberg Bible are exactly identical.

The Bibles were not ready for use when they came off the press; rubrication (red coloring), large capital letters, and decoration were still to be added. This accounts for some of the differences between the existing copies. The lavish decoration in the King's copy, printed on paper contrasts with the much plainer initials supplied in the Grenville copy. This is surprising as the Grenville copy is printed on vellum, a much more expensive medium than paper.

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Sex: God's idea

Campus Culture

Peter Schuurman

I want to say something about Christmas, but I'll wind my way there via some stories. One theme that strings them together is my growing conviction that to say "Our world belongs to God" is one of the most radical and counter-intuitive remarks one can make today.

First of all, I worked with the Intervarsity Christian student group to put together a "church service" in the campus bar. We gave it the theme "Sex: God's Idea." This is radical and counter-intuitive on two counts: first, because people perceive that God and those who speak of him so freely are on a campaign to eradicate sex and sexuality from daily living and replace it with Enforced Prayer, Bible Reading and Other Holy Activities. To discuss the relationship between sexuality and faith from a positive non-moralistic perspective is new to many. Secondly, to say that our sexuality is not our own creation but a gift and a call makes a claim that goes against everything any student has every seen on TV or read in the campus newspaper. Sex is God's idea, and has been for generations. Radical.

Children: God's idea

That brings me to another story — about children. In a world of Planned Parenthood, this story says that babies are God's idea.

There is a staff worker here at Brock who has been in a prayer group with me for five years. I'll never forget the story of her second pregnancy. She was 22 and had contracted the German measles. Her family doctor told her that her blood count was too high, and unless she wanted a blind child (or worse), she should abort the baby. She went home quite troubled, and together with her husband they agonized over what they should do.

During this time the doctor's secretary went out of her way to phone her at home. "I had an abortion," she said. "It's the best thing you can do. But do it soon. The sooner the better."

She went to the hospital, where another doctor looked her over. He came to the same conclusion and the hospital board approved it (in 1970 they still had to do that). Before she knew it, and still ambivalent about the whole idea, she found herself on a gurney in the hospital hallway with nothing but a hospital gown, and just a minute and an anesthetic away from the actual abortion.

"I told my husband to pray for me," she told me. "even though we weren't Christians at the time." Well, God's grace did not discriminate, for the gynecologist approached her as she lay on the gurney and said, "I just called a specialist in Toronto to check. He said that your blood count is nowhere near high enough. The baby would be fine if you want to take it full term."

So she got up, put her clothes on, and went home. A number of months later, a daughter was born. "She was born fine," she smiled. "As fine as you can be."

They told their daughter this story when she was older, and some tears were shed. And just a few weeks ago she was actually married. I saw the photos, and she is a beautiful young woman. "Working in the medical field, of all things," her mother said.

Christmas: God's idea

Sex, babies, and finally, a logical follow-up — Christmas. Christmas is God's idea. The Lutheran Student Movement on campus had a "Christmas Awareness" booth in the hallway the other day. They handed out candy canes and little posters that explained all the symbolism of Christmas in Christian terms. For example, one said, "Did you know that green, the colour of life and growth, represent the eternal life (i.e. *ever*green) won for us by God made flesh, Jesus Christ, who died for us on the *tree* of the cross?"

Such language seems alien to most of what happens around us during Advent. To declare with joy and trust that life—sex, children, Christmas, a new millennium — is not ours to own and control, but a gift and call from God to take pleasure in, well, that is so foreign to the way we live and think! It's a liberating thought, really. Someone Else is here. Someone Else gifts us, calls us, and will return to renew everything some day soon.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed campus chaplain at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont.

Arts/Media

My name is Joe and I am....

Ron de Boer

Several weeks back, I was giving a media workshop for high school aged teens at Mount Brydges CRC, the theme for which was "Furthering the Kingdom by Responding to and Creating Media." It was a Friday night and 80 teens from the Sarnia and London area politely listened to my views of media truth and lies, respectfully watched the clips I'd brought and courteously gazed at the colored overheads of advertisements I flashed on the wall. In short, while they found some of what I was showing them kind of interesting, they didn't seem too excited. I wondered how I could make the media as relevant to these teens as they are to the media.

Creating Christian media

So I changed the plan. One of the concepts I wanted to impress upon these teens was that not only are we called by God to *respond* to television shows, teen movies and pop music stars with a Christian perspective, but that we need to take seriously the mandate to transform the world by *creating* Christian media. I suggested that Christians should create Christian commercials in light of studies which have proven the effectiveness of commercials in selling a message.

They nodded their heads. And, I went on, since Canadians watch nearly seven hours of TV a day, living room audiences were sponges waiting to soak up Christian messages. To illustrate my point, I threw out a couple of commonly known advertisement slogans and changed them to advertisements for the Christian's life: Dial Soap's "Do you use Dial? Don't you wish everyone did?" became "Do you read the Bible? Don't you wish everyone did?" Or Miller Beer's "Anytime is Miller time!" could become "Anytime is Devotion time!" And "Coke is it," I cried, might have impact as "Christ is it."

Most of the teens thought my slogans were quite lame, until someone raised his hand and contributed one in an impressive announcer-voice: "The Old Testament prophets — they're greeeeeat," transforming the well-known Frosted Flakes commercial. A few of his buddies groaned, but the gallery seemed a bit more interested.

Then I pulled out an ad the teens knew very well — this past year's Molson Canadian "I am Joe" ad. I narrated the text of that now famous monologue and asked the teens to imagine the slides conveyed in the ad — a beaver, a chesterfield, the Team Canada hockey players:

My Name is Joe

Hey, I'm not a lumberjack or a fur trader.
I don't live in an igloo or eat blubber or own a dog sled.
And I don't know Jimmy, Sally and Suzy from Canada,
Although I'm certain they're really, really nice.

I have a Prime Minister, not a president.
I speak English and French, not American.
And I pronounce it about not a boot.

I can proudly sew my country's flag on my back pack.

I believe in peace-keeping, not policing; diversity, not assimilation.
And that the beaver IS a truly proud and noble animal.
A touque IS a hat, a chesterfield IS a couch.
And it IS pronounced Zed, not Zee, Zed.

Canada has the second largest land mass,
Is the first nation of hockey,
And the best part of North America.

My Name is Joe, and I am Canadian.

If you'll recall, the commercial ends with a near ovation with we, the audience, feeling really proud to be Canadian (or really proud to be drinking Molson Canadian!) The Molson Canadian ad attempts, of course, to present an American stereotypical view of Canadians then give out the truth about what really defines Canada.

I asked these teens if it was possible to create similar excitement showing the secular world's view of Christians followed by the truth about Christians. Could we come up with an exciting ad about being Christian, as in, "My Name is Joe and I am a Christian"? I gave them this:

My Name is Joe and I am a Christian

Hey, I'm not a Bible thumper or an African missionary.
I don't live in a fish bowl or eat manna or own a Psalter Hymnal.
And I don't know off by heart Matthew, Mark, and Luke from Bible times,
Although I'm certain they're really, really holy.

I have a minister, not a cult leader.
I speak English, not Latin or Hebrew.
And I pronounce it Malachi, not Mill-aw-chee.

I can proudly sew my church's cross on my back pack.

I believe in evangelism, not brain-washing; diversity, not being Dutch.
And that the fish IS a truly proud and noble animal.
An overhead IS a songbook; a chair IS a pew.
And it IS pronounced church, not KERK, church.

Christ is the second part of the Trinity.
The first Savior to die for us
And the best part of living on this earth.

My name is Joe and I am a Christian.

More than a few of the teens were staring at me in what seemed like disbelief. At first, I'd thought I'd offended them — Did they think I had been blasphemous? — but the next few moments showed that this rendition of the commercial had lit a fire in some of them. They were excited about the prospect that the media could be used to further the kingdom.

At the end of the evening, twelve of them requested the lyrics. Red-faced, I showed them my scribbled copy — there were words crossed out and lines inserted. My version was a working draft I'd cooked up the day before and hadn't had time to re-copy. One of them said he was going to hang the lyrics in his locker; another said she was going to bring it to her Bible study group. I was astounded.

We're all commercials

Aside from the realization that God sometimes works through the ramblings of an unshaped, working draft — much like each of us! — my epiphany really came the

HARRY DER NEDERLANDEN ILLUSTRATION

moment I saw those kids radiate at the final words: "*Christ is the second part of the Trinity, the first Savior to die for us, and the best part of living on this earth. My name is Joe and I am a Christian.*" It struck me at that moment that, in a sense, we're all commercials, that everyday life is like one big TV show, a narrative story of different settings and characters who pass by us daily. We are walking, talking commercials for Jesus Christ.

Few, if any of those kids in that dimly lit CRC church on a Friday night in late October will ever end up on a TV sound stage or behind a radio mike; few will write a script for a commercial or the lyrics to a popular song. But all of them — all of us — are commercials every day in this ongoing TV show called human life.

Wasn't it Jesus himself who said, prior to his ascension, "I'll be right back right after these messages (which, by the way, I'd like *you Christians* to deliver)"?

Vatican tells believers not to eat like Protestants

(Religion Today) — Take your time at Christmas dinner, and other meals, the Vatican says. As Americans gathered around the Thanksgiving table, theologians in Italy debated whether long, formal meals are morally superior to fast food. Massimo Salani, who teaches at the theological institute in Pisa, Italy, started the unusual debate recently by declaring that McDonald's and other fast-food restaurants invading Europe reflect the "complete neglect of the sacred nature of food."

Hamburgers are not a "Catholic" type of meal, eaten in a community, but correspond more to Protestant individualism, he said. "People eat anything, at any hour, in any way, next to — not together with — anyone. They eat standing up, with their hands," Salani lamented.

The increase in anorexia and bulimia are symptoms that meals have become more about "relieving stress," he said, and a more healthy and balanced approach is needed. Newspapers picked up the story, and one headline read, "Theologian excommunicates the hamburger."

The Vatican took the story with a grain of salt. Hamburgers aren't "Protestant," theologian Georges Cotter said, according to Catholic News Service. But he noted that while parts of the debate have turned "silly," there is value in taking unhurried meals. Also, prayer before meals regrettably is becoming less common, Cotter said. Praying before eating reminds Christians that "all this comes from God and reflects his glory."

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Church

Rome: dialogue with culture 'belongs especially' to laity

ROME (ZENIT.org) — The Church's dialogue with, and evangelization of, the culture is a crucial task that "belongs especially to the laity," a Vatican official says.

Archbishop Stanislaus Rylko, the secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, said the task is of "extreme urgency because the future of humanity is at stake in this sphere: Culture will either help man to be more man or, emptied of values, it will destroy him."

He aired his warning in an address to about 550 delegates attending the World Congress of Catholic Laity in Rome.

Insisting that the laity's vocation to sanctity is not "second class," Archbishop Rylko focused on the meaning of the often-misinterpreted Second Vatican Council, and the new horizons it opened to the laity.

"The council completed the process of the theological definition of the figure of the lay faithful," he said, "and its teaching has been a real evangelical ferment for the renewal of the Church in our time."

Called to be the ferment

Asked about the specific mission of the laity, Archbishop Rylko replied: "They live in the midst of commitments and occupations of the world, within the ordinary conditions of family and social life, where they are called to be the ferment for the sanctification of the world. ... The layman is, so to speak, the nerve centre at which the Church meets the world."

He continued: "The new situations, both ecclesial as well as social, economic, political and cultural, today call, with very special force, for the action of the lay faithful. If the lack of commitment has always been unacceptable, the present time makes it even more culpable.

"Therefore, the lay faithful must be in the front line to construct a more just and human world; because they know that it is only in Christ that the answers are found, who fulfills the most profound aspirations of the heart of man."

Faith, he said, "insofar as it is a personal choice of Christ, is lived authentically and not just enclosed in the private sphere [when] it becomes a style of life able to generate a profound communion among people, and to challenge and shake those who see us."

The archbishop warned the faithful to avoid "the possible 'clericalization' of the laity" in Church activities. He hoped, rather, for a new period of association "to participate actively in the communion and mission of the Church."

Archbishop Rylko also focused on the contemporary situation. "New movements and sodalities have blossomed with a specific physiognomy and purpose," he said. "John Paul II gives much attention to the ecclesial movements; he sees in them a precious fruit of Vatican II and an especially effective instrument for the new evangelization."

As regards Christians today, Archbishop Rylko said, "The real problem is not in being a minority, but in becoming irrelevant or useless for the world."

There must be a revolution of faith, the archbishop said, which enables the Christian to go against the current. The model is the testimony of countless martyrs, he added. "The yeast is a minority, but it makes a great quantity of dough ferment."

Baptists sponsor rodeo outreach

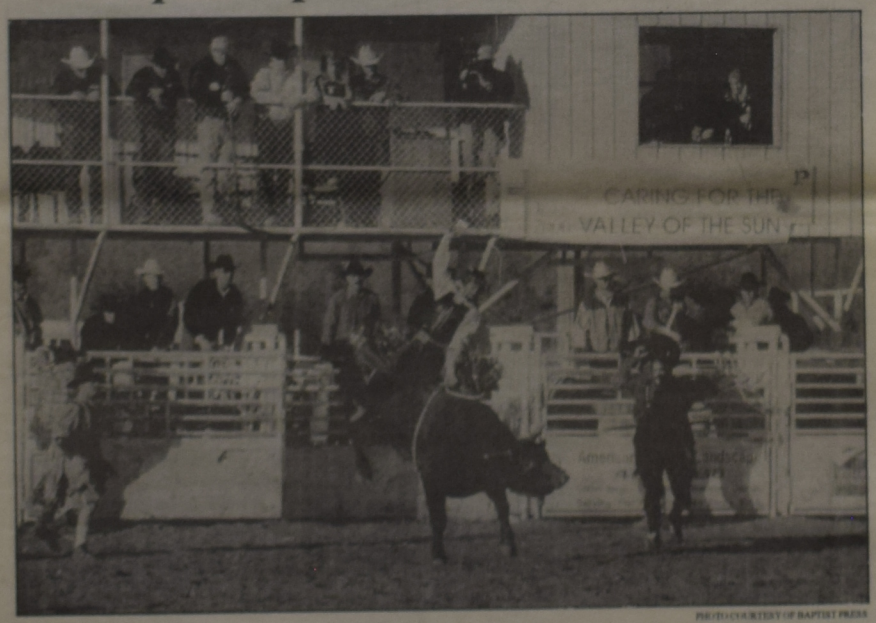

PHOTO COURTESY OF BAPTIST PRESS

In Cave Creek, Arizona, near Phoenix, a group of Baptist organizations sponsored a rodeo, not as a fund-raiser, but as an evangelistic outreach. Besides slinging the bull, participants also shared their testimonies. The idea came from a pastor who had once been a rodeo cowboy.

Serbian minister promises greater religious freedom

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (EP) — The interim government of Serbia will work to improve relations with the Serbian Orthodox church, as well as other religions, promised acting Minister of Religion Dr. Gordana Misic-Anicic.

Keston News Agency reports that Misic-Anicic released a statement Oct. 27 promising to return all property that once belonged to the Orthodox church. Misic-Anicic's decision ends the decade-long battle between the church and government for possession of the properties. Misic-Anicic also told Keston's Branko Bjelajac that she favors the idea of the Orthodox church teaching religious education in public schools. Misic-Anicic also favors returning the duty of recording births, deaths and marriages to the Church.

Although many of her new reforms favor a greater role of the Orthodox church in public life, Misic-Anicic told Keston this "does not mean that I will in any way neglect co-operation with other religious communities...We will also contact the humanitarian religious organizations, for I believe that their activity in helping our population is very important and useful."

Misic-Anicic specifically mentioned that Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, Reformed and Lutheran communities will be allowed to function within Serbia.

Misic-Anicic will continue to serve as minister of religion until the Dec. 23 elections decide which of Serbia's three political parties will serve as the next leaders of Serbia.

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Bald truth turns on congregation

AUSTIN, Tex. (EP) — A revival in Texas was sparked when an Austin pastor blew his top — literally.

Members of Promise Land church in Austin were shocked when Pastor Kenneth Phillips interrupted a sermon on pride by removing the hairpiece he had worn for more than 20 years.

People were absolutely shocked, and then they began to fall on their faces on the floor," Phillips' son Randy, an associate minister at the 2,000-strong independent Pentecostal church, told Charisma News Service. "Ever since then it has been the deepest, most intense worship we have ever known ...God has completely turned this place upside down."

Randy Phillips said his father's action had a profound impact. "It was the most visual sign of humility you will ever see anyone do," he said. "My dad is such a dignified man...then to see this was quite an impact."

Since that dramatic June 4 sermon, the church has had to add a second Sunday morning service to cope with increased attendance, and more than 200 people have been baptized in the church. There have been reports of healings, and churches across the country have requested copies of the video of the service that introduced what has become known as "The Austin Awakening."

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NCC leader disavows marriage statement

NEW YORK, N.Y. (EP) — Although the financially troubled National Council of Churches (NCC) is proposing greater co-operation with evangelicals, its general secretary backed out of a co-operative initiative Nov. 17, disavowing an interdenominational statement on marriage because of opposition by homosexuals.

Bob Edgar, General Secretary of the NCC withdrew his earlier endorsement of the "Christian Declaration on Marriage" a week after it was issued, saying that some members of the NCC "interpret the document more as a condemnation of same-sex unions than as an affirmation of marriage." He apologized to the NCC annual assembly for having signed the document without authorization.

'Apology to those I hurt'

Edgar said he should not have signed the "Christian Declaration of Marriage" without the approval of the NCC's 26 member denominations. He offered his "personal apology to those I hurt" by signing the document, and offered support for same-sex unions at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Breakfast during the NCC General Assembly meeting.

"After careful review, I realized it is a mistake," he said. "I'm removing my name from that letter and will communicate it to each of the signatory partners."

The declaration was heralded as an unprecedented example of Christian unity. In addition to the NCC, the statement was endorsed by the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

The document does not mention same-sex marriages specifically, but affirms that "marriage is a holy union of one man and one woman." It calls for "a stronger commitment to this holy union" and "practical ministries and influence for reversing the course of our culture."

Still, the document clearly doesn't favor same-sex marriage. That point was driven home when the document was publicly unveiled. Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission president Richard Land referred to same-sex unions as "counterfeit alternative relationships" which fail to benefit society in the way heterosexual marriages do.

Edgar said he decided to withdraw his endorsement of the document because the statement's failure to mention same-sex unions could be taken by some as "proof that all of the signatories disapprove of such unions." He explained, "In our dangerously fragmented and violent society, misinterpretation of the declaration may be used by some as a pretext for attacks on gay-lesbian persons."

'Very disappointed'

Kevin Mannoia, president of NAE, helped put the statement together. He said he was "very disappointed" by Edgar's decision. The document was about marriage, he noted, "not about homosexual relationships." In fact, he said, "There was no conversation nor any printed comments that were in any way derogatory to persons practicing homosexuality."

After Edgar apologized to NCC leaders for his participation in the statement, the organization determined that it would continue to seek talks with Catholics and evangelicals to discuss building closer relationships. Edgar said his actions regarding the marriage statement "should in no way be seen as a weakening of my commitment to building the larger ecumenical table about which we have talked."

However, Land saw the NCC's reaction to the document as a significant setback for greater cooperation by evangelicals. "If the price the NCC demands for ecumenism is the inclusion and acceptance of same-sex marriages, that will never happen, and never is a long time," he said. "That's not open for discussion within the evangelical, the Southern Baptist or Roman Catholic communions."

Behold, a virgin shall conceive

Chapter & Verse
Al Wolters

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."
(Isa 7:14, KJV)
"Behold, a young woman shall conceive..."
(Isa 7:14, RSV)
"The virgin will be with child..."
(Isa 7:14, NIV)

The translation of this verse in Isaiah has been hotly debated. The issue is whether the Hebrew word *'almah* should be translated "young woman" or "virgin." On the one hand are those who point out that the normal meaning of this word elsewhere in the Old Testament is "young woman," and that Hebrew has another word meaning "virgin" (namely *betulah*).

On the other hand are those who point out that the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) already has the translation "virgin," and that it is this translation that is quoted by Matthew in the New Testament when he tells the story of the virgin birth: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son...'" (Mt 1:22-23). How can the virgin birth of Jesus be a fulfillment of this verse in Isaiah if the latter really refers to just a "young woman," not a "virgin" (that is, a woman who has not yet had sexual intercourse)?

New translation raised questions

The issue was not really a problem for the ordinary Bible reader as long as the King James Version was the only widely used English translation of the Bible. But when the Revised Standard Version was published in 1952, the problem became evident to everyone, since this translation changed the familiar "virgin" of Isa 7:14 to "young woman," so that there was now an apparent discrepancy between this verse and the way it was quoted in the New Testament. Many conservatives attacked the RSV as deliberately distorting one of the clearest Messianic predictions in the Old Testament, and took this as evidence that the RSV was promoting a liberal theological agenda.

Nevertheless, many theologically conservative denominations (such as the Christian Reformed Church and the Canadian Reformed Churches) did eventually adopt the RSV. Many widely-used subsequent Bible translations (for example, the Jerusalem Bible, the New English Bible, and Today's English Version) also have the rendering "young woman" in Isa 7:14, even though they have "virgin" in Mt 1:23. What are we to make of this apparent discrepancy?

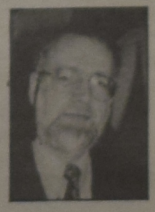
With or without focus on virginity

There really is no significant discrepancy. The Hebrew word *'almah* does mean "young woman," but it refers specifically to a sexually mature young woman who is either unmarried or recently married. You might say she is a sexually inexperienced young woman, who would in most cases be a "virgin" in the sense of never having had sexual intercourse. When Mary gave birth to Jesus, she was in fact still an *'almah*, and thus fulfilled the Immanuel text from Isaiah quite literally.

But did the Septuagint translation "virgin" (Greek *parthenos*), which Matthew quotes, not illegitimately restrict the meaning of the Hebrew term *'almah*? Actually not, because the Greek term was used "generally of a young woman of marriageable age, with or without focus on virginity," to quote the recently published third edition of the most authoritative dictionary of New Testament Greek (BDAG). In other words, the Greek word *parthenos*, when used *without* a focus on virginity, was quite a good translation of Hebrew *'almah*. Of course this same word, when applied to the story of the virgin birth, could also be used *with* a focus on virginity.

It should not surprise us that the same word could sometimes imply virginity and sometimes not, since the English words "maid" and "maiden" have historically had the same ambiguity. In fact, we find examples of the same ambiguity in Latin (*virgo*), German (*Magd*), and Dutch (*maagd*).

Consequently there is no need to be critical of the RSV (and other Bible translations) for its rendering of the Immanuel verse in Isaiah, and we can still affirm with Matthew that this prophecy finds its fulfillment in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.



Al Wolters teaches Bible and Greek at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario. This academic year he is also teaching Hebrew.

Seventh Day Adventists meet with evangelicals

(Religion Today) — Evangelical Protestants and Seventh-day Adventists are looking for ways to co-operate. A planned series of meetings between Adventist leaders and representatives of the World Evangelical Fellowship is intended to foster understanding between the two groups, according to Adventist News Service. They have significant differences over some doctrines and practices.

"We want to move beyond false stereotypes, to see where we agree and disagree, and to explore areas where we could mutually benefit by working together, such as on religious liberty issues," said Bert Beach, director of inter-church relations for the Seventh-day Adventist church. The groups will exchange scholarly papers on various subjects over the next few years.

The goal is to reach a "clear understanding between the parties in the dialogue regarding each others' opinions," Beach said. "They are not interested in forging agreements on theological or doctrinal issues. There is no interest in ecumenism as such on either side," he said, but they hope to establish profiles of each other to know how to better communicate.

S. Africa's men of peace unite to fight AIDS

JOHANNESBURG (ENI) — At a rare appearance together on December 6, South Africa's three Nobel peace prizewinners — Nelson Mandela, F.W De Klerk and Archbishop Desmond Tutu — launched a 'prayer for HIV/AIDS' and called for an end to the silence and stigmatisation surrounding the disease. The prayer service at St. Mary's Anglican Cathedral in Johannesburg showed the strongest commitment yet by prominent personalities to address AIDS in South Africa, where 4.2 million people (10 per cent of the population) are estimated to be infected with the HIV virus.

Environment/Agriculture

Shoemaker Pond

Art Timmerman

For eight and a half years our family lived in a community of close to a quarter of a million people. From our house we could hear the steady drone of the expressway as people moved themselves to and from other big cities and little towns. Shortly after we moved to the city, I "discovered" Shoemaker pond. Shoemaker pond is a small kettle lake left over from the last glacier. From our home, I could walk there in ten minutes. Somehow, this pond and surrounding natural area had survived in one of the fastest growing municipalities in all of Canada.

A quick escape

Shoemaker pond provided me with a quick escape. It was a bit of wild in the middle of the city. If you stood in the right spot and looked in the right direction, for a moment you could imagine that you were not even in the city but at the edge of a northern lake. During those years, I visited Shoemaker pond many times and almost every time I went there, I saw something new. On each visit, the pond treated me to one of its little secrets; the seasonal advance of aquatic plants across its surface, where the snapping turtle lays her eggs, where the mallards nest, the sounds of the different kinds of frogs; how the minnows lay their eggs on the floating undersurface of the pondweeds and where the heron likes to wait for its next meal.

Really a wetland

The pond is really a wetland. Wetlands are areas where land and water come together and they are very productive and diverse habitats. An acquaintance of mine put together a list of all the species of birds ever seen at the pond and surrounding area between 1921 and 1984. Since 1921, 172 bird species have been recorded. He has seen 110 species himself and I've tallied 63, and I'm far from being an expert. This compared with the dozen or so species that I was able to find around our house only ten minutes away.

Their first fish or frog

For many youngsters in the city, Shoemaker pond was where they caught their first fish or frog and where they were first introduced to the natural environment. It was where they first heard the loud rattle of the kingfisher as it swooped down from the dead tree and where they saw their first snake. Shoemaker pond was where many young lads got their first "soakers" after they let their curiosity get the best of them. There was nothing virtual about Shoemaker pond — this was the real thing.

As far back as 1973, the city planners have considered extending the expressway through the park beside the pond. In their minds, the new road would allow for "more efficient movement of commuters". This would have severely altered the pond and reduced many of its values. Due to public protest, the road was not built. With the tremendous amount of growth that has occurred in the city in the past 25 years, places like Shoemaker pond have become more precious than ever and I suspect that public protest will keep it just as it is for a long, long time. Actually, the surrounding natural area is growing. A few years ago, part of the park was allowed to go wild and was no longer mowed. Over time this area will yield to forest. Bird houses have been put up. The park has been "adopted" by some neighbors with guidance from the city and they periodically clean up the garbage.

I no longer live in the city. The forests and streams are more plentiful where I live now and I visit them often. For the time I did live in the city though, I was thankful for the gift of Shoemaker pond. Do you have a Shoemaker pond in your neighborhood? If you do, cherish it and do your part to protect it. Rally round when it is being threatened. Give it a hand.

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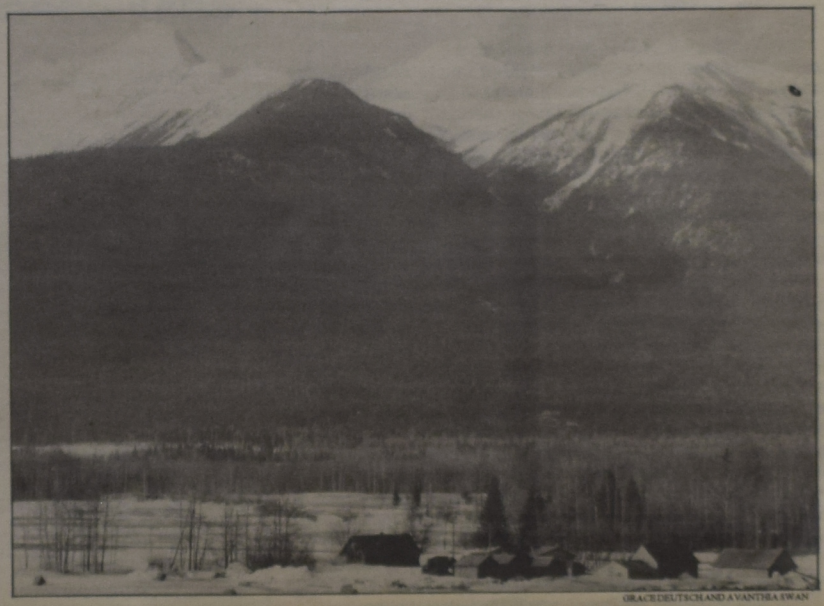
Looking to the hills

COUNTRY COUNTERCULTURE

VERN M. GLEDDIE



GRACE DEUTSCHLAND AVANTHRA SWAN

There is something about a landscape of hills that is refreshing to the spirit. In early November after the ground is frozen and field work is out of the question, my wife and I head for B.C. We visit family, but we also enjoy an extension of fall.

After crossing the Great Divide in the mountains where the rivers all flow west, the forests become more exotic than here in Alberta, and leaves are still on the trees. We feast on the grandeur of the mountains and hills.

As we drove along through the interior of B.C., I wondered out loud about Psalm 121 (NIV) which begins: "I lift up my eyes to the hills — where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." What is the connection between looking up to the hills and the fact that our help comes from the Lord?

It could be, as theologians and other wise people say, that the author was looking toward the hills of Zion because the dwelling place of God was there.

Or the author may have written this psalm on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and he was not only anticipating his arrival at the temple in the hills, but counting on God to safely see him through hilled areas to his destination. The hills could hide dangerous marauders. That may be why the remainder of the psalm is filled with reminders of God as keeper.

These observations are surely both correct and comforting, but another reason may well be that the creation draws one's attention to the Creator (Rom. 1:20). The smell of sagebrush, the call of a meadowlark, or the sight of a herd of antelope does it for me. The hills too, a panorama of trees, grasses and rock, speak of God. When my eyes are lifted to the hills, my thoughts are inexorably drawn to God.

A few years ago one of my sons found healing through a creation encounter with God. He was in his first year on staff at a college in the B.C. interior teaching and coaching. In his eagerness to get into coaching, he had agreed to a heavy teaching assignment — too heavy. As he neared the end of the year, he realized he was sinking under the load. "I hit the wall," was his assessment.

On a Sunday afternoon, emotionally and physically exhausted, he drove out of town into the surrounding hills. There he discovered a vista where someone had thoughtfully placed a bench. He lay down for a nap in that sunny nook. While he lay curled up there, the wind suddenly stirred, tugging at his coat.

In rapid succession the following came to mind. First, irritation at the wind. Then he thought of Jonah's resentment when God removed the vine that had given him shade. Following that came the thought of Jesus calming the stormy sea. And finally a Psalm came to mind from his childhood: "Be still and know that I am God." From that hillside epiphany my son received the strength to go back and complete the year.

"I lift up my eyes to the hills." The tranquil blending of shades of blue, green and brown on those hills no one else can mix the way God does. Who but God can make trees grow on steep rocky slopes? God designs the interdependency of plants, animals, birds, insects and microorganisms — with the bonus of pleasing sounds and scents. The wind, mysterious in its coming and going, pulls music from the trees and grass.

We, the crown of creation, worry and fret. Yet God clothes the lily and keeps his eye on the sparrow. And on us too. We are fortunate that creation reminds us that God rested in all that he has made. So we, too, can find rest.

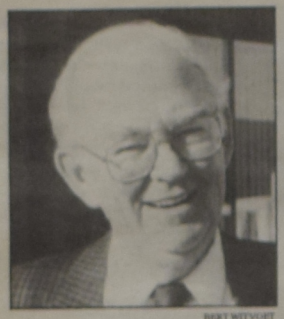
Vern Gleddie has a sheep ranch near Edmonton, Alta.

Opinion

Election afterthoughts

Gerald Vandezande

During the recent federal election campaign, a Christian church displayed the following message on its front-lawn sign: "Vote as God would have you!" The question I immediately asked myself and a few friends, "Do we, individually and communally, really know? What would God's political (religious) wish be? What would it say to all concerned, both within and beyond the Christian Church?



BERT WITVOET

Gerald Vandezande

How, then, should I vote?

I strongly feel that church sign messages or slogans should be creative, positive expressions conveying elements of the biblical faith that genuinely speak to the hungry hearts and searching minds of people who may or do wonder what the Christian Church wants to share with neighbors and the public-at-large. They, like us, live in a bewildering, deeply secularized culture and often ask: How, then, should I live, relate, work, vote?

We know that all faith-communities, including our own, constantly face new challenges to convey effectively the liberating message, vital meaning and daily practice of authentic faith in our pluralistic society. In fact, Christians and other people of faith, especially our institutions and organizations, owe it to God, to God's people – and especially to all who sincerely wish to know more about God's way and often wonder about the purpose of human life in our confusing world – to be clear about what a living faith could mean in our everyday situations.

We may not assume that we have all the answers to life's tough questions. Nor may we leave the impression that belief in God "solves" all our personal problems and our society's complex issues. For all of us and our neighbors, daily life continues to be a daily search for what it means to live responsibly in our pluralistic society in harmony with God's wisdom. Life is and remains a real struggle until Jesus returns.

Speak more profoundly

In my view, it is imperative that the churches' lawn signs and worship services consistently convey messages that speak much more clearly and profoundly to our human needs and community challenges, also as these messages seek to communicate with and engage fellow citizens who may or may not be seeking a church home and a meaningful way of life. So, the messages on the signs and from the pulpits really need to be relevant, responsible invitations and positive, specific challenges to come to grips with what human life is all about, what it means to be a neighbor, a parent, a friend, a co-worker, a community member, a citizen, a voter, etc.

Many Christians have similar concerns about the vision, mission, message, aims and activities of Christian churches. I would welcome open-hearted dialogue where we as Christians can come to greater clarity and reach a coherent consensus about the particular place and unique task of our congregations and denominations at this critical juncture in our communities' and country's culture and history.

I'm thankful that the church, a few days before Election Day, changed its message on the lawn sign to: "Vote for justice, mercy and life!" I hope the voters took this biblical challenge to heart.

What would have been your response and creative suggestions?

Gerald Vandezande is author of **JUSTICE, NOT JUST US: Faith Perspectives and National Priorities** *available from the Public Justice Resource Centre, 229 College St., Suite 311, Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R4.*

Florida comparison offensive

RICHMOND, B.C. — Prime Minister Chretien is drawing the wrong lesson from what is happening in Florida, according to Fair Voting B.C., a citizens society supporting electoral reform. "The lesson from Florida is that we need more democracy, not less," said Nick Loenen, a society director.

CCPILES

Nick Loenen

While campaigning in Vancouver Chretien told a breakfast audience that anyone contemplating voting for third-place parties should remember what happened in Florida when some people there wasted their votes on third party candidates.

According to Loenen such comparisons are not only offensive but also show how undemocratic our own voting system is. Many voters are forced to vote strategically: afraid to split the vote, they forego supporting their first choice in favor of a second choice lest they inadvertently help elect their lowest choice.

Our system inhibits free expression

As Loenen points out, most democracies have voting systems that place no such constraints on voting. Such systems waste few, if any, votes. In contrast, under our system most votes do not contribute to the election outcome — such votes are wasted. On November 27, the majority of voters got neither the party nor the candidate they voted for. Our voting system inhibits free expression.

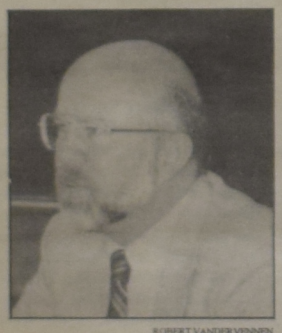
The Florida travesty of democracy is due to an antiquated voting system. To blame Ralph Nader supporters for being misguided in wasting their votes is to not only put the blame in the wrong place, it is also dismissive of a voter's right to express an opinion without constraints.

Fair Voting B.C. points out that our House of Commons will not be representative of Canadians until seats are allocated much closer to the popular vote. And that, too, interestingly, is the lesson from Florida for the U.S. system.

If Chretien is truly concerned about people wasting their votes he should fulfil the promise he made on May 9, 1984 in Brandon Manitoba, where he said that bringing in a system of proportional representation will be "one of my first acts as prime minister."

For further information, call Nick Loenen at: 604-274-3868.

Debate over force, violence, and justice



ROBERT VANDERVENNEN

James Skillen

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Center for Public Justice) — Jim Skillen and Keith Pavlischek participated in a debate at the American Academy of Religion conference in Nashville November 16-19. The debate was with Richard B. Hays, author of *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, a chapter of which, "Violence in Defense of Justice," the Civitas scholars discussed during this summer's institute, and which was the focus of this debate.

Force, violence, coercion

Hays, a New Testament professor at Duke University, is representative of an increasingly influential group of theologians and Christian ethicists. They are pacifists who not only reject as sinful Christian participation in war, but also question or reject Christian participation in government generally, since, in their view, it is based on "force, violence and coercion."

They propose instead that Christians focus on the church — the Christian *polis* — which, they argue, is to be understood as a non-violent alternative to the politics and government of the world.

They do not seek normative commandments or principles for society in God's good creation order, in natural law, or in common grace, arguing that the life and teachings of Jesus provide the norms and standards for life in the Christian community. Hays, Stanley Hauerwas, and the late John Howard Yoder take their stance over against long-standing ideas of "Christendom," the roots of which go back to the rule of the first Christian who became Roman emperor, Constantine.

While Skillen and Pavlischek offered a critical assessment of Hays' argument, the conference session opened the way to what we hope will be an ongoing conversation about the nature of justice, political community, and Christian public responsibility. A short and basic articulation of the non-imperial and non-pacifist stance of the Center for Public Justice can be found in Jim Skillen's essay "What Distinguishes the Center for Public Justice?" You may read the essay at: **http://www.cpjustice.org/stories/storyReader$38.**

Excerpt from CPJ website:

Rejecting both Christian imperialism and Christian nationalism or statism (and all secularized derivations from them), the Center for Public Justice believes that a more consistent Christian approach to politics and government should appeal neither to church nor to nation or state as its linchpin of privilege, security, and identity.

Rather, it should take its marching orders from God's call to do justice to all in a politically organized society. The approach might be called Christian democratic or Christian pluralist. This approach interprets politics as part of the unfolding drama of world history in which God's rule is being established by the lordship of Jesus Christ. This lordship calls neither for church-governed societies (the church is not lord) nor for Christian-majority-governed societies (neither Christian citizens nor majorities are lord). Rather, a Christian democratic or pluralist politics recognizes that Christ alone is Lord.

Under that divine government of the nations, all human beings continue to be upheld in this age by God's grace, receiving the same rain and sunshine and countless other public blessings....

Testimony

Treasures hidden in the darkness

Dan Wooding

What happens to your Christian faith when your husband is suffering terribly and all four of your sons divorce?

Carole Logsdon had everything, including a successful businessman husband, Duane, who gave millions of dollars to world missions. Duane was the founding chairman of the Luis Palau Evangelistic Team. He was also on the board at Narramore Christian Foundation and Whittier Christian High School. The couple had four happily married sons, and an enviable lifestyle with beautiful homes in Fullerton, California, and on a golf course in Palm Desert.

But then a whole series of tragedies hit her, nearly causing her to lose her faith.

DAN WOODING

Carole and Duane Logsdon

"I couldn't believe so much anger could be inside of me. My reaction was a volatile emotional explosion."

The problems began just before Christmas in 1988, when Duane was diagnosed with a tumor in the inner ear. "He had been to see Dr. Ralph Nelson at the House Institute Of Otology in Los Angeles, for a hearing problem," explains Carole. "Our thoughts did not comprehend anything beyond a hearing loss and maybe a hearing aid to help his deficiency. We were not ready for the diagnosis ... an acoustic neuroma.

"We were told that the surgical procedure would entail a craniotomy. The incision would be in front of the left ear, curving behind the hair line to about three inches above the ear and down behind the ear. The tumor would be reached through a window in the skull, then lifting the brain and proceeding down into the inner ear."

In a state of shock

"We both were in a state of shock for several days. We were scared. We prayed, cried, and searched the Scriptures for comfort and help and we talked with our family. In the meantime, the surgical preparations were being made with a team of four specialists."

The doctor had recommended immediate surgery, which went ahead.

"When the doctors told us the surgery was over and that Duane had done very well," said Carole, "and they were confident that hearing would be restored, but they had had to take out the balance nerve. He would have to regain the ability to walk by sheer grit until the other side of his brain took over. Meanwhile he would be in intensive care for approximately two nights and three days."

Carole felt an uneasiness in her soul. "Somehow just holding my Bible in dazed sleep seemed to help as I lay in my hotel room," she said. "By this time I was too tired to pray. It all seemed like a dream and my emotions felt numb, dull and without sensitivity. Somehow I felt like something wasn't going right.

"On the tenth day, Duane was discharged from the hospital to take the long trip home," Carole said. "I discovered that he was suffering from hyperacusis, recruitment and tinnitus. The noise of the car and the traffic made him very ill. When he was finally settled in his bed, it seemed like he was so weak and fragile, but we were happy to get him home. This was an indication to us of God's faithfulness, and it was the only Christmas gift any of us wanted.

"As a family, all the boys and their wives were so supportive and caring that we felt very rich and blessed. We had each other, our family, and the days ahead would be filled with progress and recovery. My trust and hope, though, seemed to hanging by a thread. I knew the Lord could heal Duane but would he? I still could not say to the Lord, thy will be done."

Shattered ideals

In the midst of this situation, a fax message came into the Logsdon home. It was from one of their sons announcing that he was getting divorced.

"After Duane and I read the fax-letter, we stood looking at each other in stunned disbelief, then anger took hold, tears flowed, and the flow wouldn't stop," she said. "I just wanted to bang my fist through the wall. How could this be happening in our family, in our home? I was so angry that my body was shaking and my legs felt like they wouldn't hold me up. I sat down and wrote a reply, then pushed the start button on the fax and watched the letter slowly feed into the machine. It's a wonder the letter did not burn up in the process.

"I couldn't believe so much anger could be inside of me. My reaction was a volatile emotional explosion. After that explosion I started in on the Lord saying. 'Where were you, Lord, when all of this was going on? Why did you allow this to happen?' I asked.

Expecting to live 'happily ever after'

"Many of us have been brought up with the ideal that if we know Christ personally, and ensure that our children have that same foundation of faith in Christ and have been raised with Christian values and integrity, we have the right to expect our little family unit to live 'Happily Ever After.' We just can't anticipate we will have to experience trials or disappointments like divorce. We had expected that our children would stay married, especially as they had been raised in a home where their father was a pastor who never even thought about, let alone approved of, divorce.

"This was an unreality for us. When our ideals are shattered and no longer are a reality we experience such disappointment with the Lord that our fellowship with him becomes strained. I felt like my prayers went about as far as the ceiling. I could not feel the Lord's presence and it was hard to associate God's love with all the anger and pain that I felt and that had the impact of a bomb!

"Little did Duane and I know that, in the months to come, we would walk this way *three more times* and also lose our granddaughter Tammie in tragic circumstances. By the time the fourth divorce was announced, Duane and I were numb and devoid of feeling. We started out with anger at the news of the first divorce; now we felt destroyed, void of life and through with living.

"On top of Duane's physical problems and the divorces, loneliness was added to our life of isolation. We desperately felt the emotion and pain that our sons were going through. The loss of each daughter-in-law seemed unbearable. Each of the girls have a special place in our hearts. We felt robbed of the daughters that God had given us through the marriages of our sons.

"Duane and I tried hard not to interfere in our children's home life or marriages, so much so that we never visited unless we called them first. There were days when we felt even God had forgotten us."

Face to face

As time went by, it became obvious that Duane was losing his battle with cancer. A friend asked him one day, "Duane, how do you feel about your going to heaven soon?" Through a fog, Carole heard Duane's voice reply weakly, "I'm ready Earl. My concern is for Carole. Would you check on her once in a while to see how she is doing?"

"That was so like him," said Carole, "to be more concerned for me than for himself. I loved that man so much; I wondered how could I ever live without him. Yet.... at the same time I knew I could not keep watching his suffering without letting go of him. Sometime I had to say, 'Honey, it is okay that you be with Jesus. I'll be all right because the Lord will take care of me just like He took care of both of us and our family through the years.'

"Then Earl suddenly stepped aside and motioned for me to take his place beside the bed. To my dread, I knew that the time had arrived. The words came out of my mouth as I confidently held Duane's hand while tears were running down both of our cheeks. This confidence could only have come from the Lord, as I was in an uncontrollable emotional state. We talked about heaven and whom he would see there and what he would do there. We also talked about how wonderful it would be to see the Lord face to face. Duane's parents, both of our oldest granddaughters would be there to greet him, too. In fact, we counted more people of our family in heaven than down here on earth.

"I told him I was praying for angels to fill our bedroom because I wanted him to tell me how beautiful they were. When we were through, Earl came closer to the bed and we all held hands and prayed together.

"There was an army of Christian friends who held us before the throne of grace on a daily basis. Some of those dear people we did not know, but they helped us carry our burdens. Some of these people were even from other countries. This spoke volumes to us. It seemed the Lord was saying, " I know, I care and I AM with you!"

Help!

"It became evident to both Duane and myself that we could no longer physically fight this battle of cancer without help. I made a trip to the office of our family doctor, Royce Hutain, and he gave me a referral for in-home hospice care.

"On November 21, 1997 we faced this challenge and met our hospice care team. Duane was assigned very special people who would daily walk with us, pray with us and not only care for Duane's physical needs, but our spiritual and emotional needs as well.

"Several days later, I called my sister-in-law Margie from North Carolina and asked her to come. She had offered to come live with us and help in any way that she could. She arrived within days of the call to share the cooking responsibilities, answering the telephone, the door, running errands, or helping with Duane's needs. Our bedroom became the focal point of our daily activities. The three of us even had our meals together there.

"The hospice team was in and out on a daily basis. After being isolated for nine years, it was hard to adjust to all that was going on. I had dreams of people even coming in through the windows, and telephones that would never stop ringing. Sleep, for me, became sporadic and my nerves

became frayed.

"I am a perfectionist by nature, and all of life was out of control. I did crazy things like trying to drive my car through a closed garage door, or starting out in the car to run an errand and end up in some unrelated place. As Duane's health declined even more in the next 10 weeks, the boys started taking turns staying through the week. One of them was here all the time. The last 10 days the family members took a turn on two-hour shifts around the clock to be with Duane.

"People are God's ambassadors who physically serve in his place. When they minister love one to another, it leaves its mark. God's mark."

"My parents (both in their late 80s) brought food, as did other family, friends and neighbors. Dad had just finished his second hospitalization, taking chemotherapy for the cancer battle he was fighting, and yet he was right in there, doing his part to help.

"God gave each of us a personal, private time with Duane and we were all able to say our good-by to him. We have all mentioned that, as a family, this was a blessed privilege and a time that was precious to all of us.

"In Duane, we saw a man that never wavered in his faith or his love to any of us or his Lord. He still could smile and be appreciative of anyone who cared for him.

"It was on Sunday morning, February 22, 1998, at 6:15 a.m. that my beloved husband went home to be with Jesus. He was at last free from his suffering. He was free from a body that held him a prisoner for so many years. We, as a family, were in deep sorrow but not like those who have no hope. We will be with him again."

Darkness

Carole admits that his death, and the other tragedies that were befalling her, was sending her into a deep depression. "There was a battle of battles to keep my faith," she said. "If there was a God, why would he allow such emotional pain, confusion and hurt? It seemed everywhere I looked loneliness was my shadow. That shadow filled my entire being with the same darkness. Even in the midst of a crowd I was alone."

"My family and best friends could not touch my loneliness.

Man of Sorrows, *painted by Albrecht Durer. "We, as a family, were in deep sorrow but not like those who have no hope."*

How could they when I couldn't even let the Lord into my life? That was evident by the experience in the prayer room at my church. It was unfair of me to criticize those who had come to help me. They were trying to comfort, but I did not want their suggestions much less their advice, just their prayers. I wanted them to take away the pain, but God, in his love, would not allow that to happen. My Lord was standing before me, waiting with open arms. He wanted to be my comfort and my '*all*' but I was digging in my heels and yelling, 'No ... not this way Lord. *Don't walk with me in this pain. Just take it away.'* I was not ready to walk into his arms under these circumstances. I did not want him to come any closer.

A deep inner conflict

"Stuffed down deep inside my humanness, I was subconsciously blaming the Lord for my anguish. At the same time, my heart was saying, 'All things work together for good to those who love the Lord.' The conflict was so great that it permeated every part of my life. I did not want to feel this way, but I felt trapped. My circumstances were not going to change and, at this point, praying about my emotions was not changing the situation either.

"It was hard to go to church, especially seeing loving couples hold hands, sit with arms around one another, hearing their words of support in prayer and encouragement to each other in a group setting. I missed holding hands, as well as hugs. I longed for tender whispers and the physical presence of my sweetheart. These were all reminders of my loss. The feelings of envy I was experiencing were even more unsettling.

"While in this state of anger, several things transpired. I attended social activities to escape the depression, or spent hours on the golf course. It was good to have a short-lived feeling of lightheartedness. After all, wasn't it better to laugh than cry? It was easier to laugh but when letdown time came, when the lock on the front door was turned to go into the empty house, depression returned, and loneliness was waiting on the other side of the door.

"My medicine cabinet became a regular drugstore filled with anything that would kill pain. However, I knew this was not the answer. My body seemed to be fighting this never-ending struggle as well. It wasn't long before I made two trips to the emergency room at nearby St. Jude Hospital. My blood pressure was at stroke level and the pains in my chest were almost unbearable. As a result, I was put on blood pressure medication and heart medication. I was told stress could be a killer.

"Was God going to take my health, too, or was I going crazy? Death seemed like an easy way out. I really didn't want to live but was to scared to do anything about it. Maybe God would intervene and just take me home to heaven in some natural way."

God's ambassadors

"I did not want people around me. It was a comfort to be alone in my bedroom. But my family and friends would not let me isolate myself. I did not have the privilege of saying no. My friend Bonnie had Monday night football dinners for a group of gals. Sometimes we ended up talking more than watching football. The boys and their families visited often and shared their lives, which kept me in the land of the living. Lee and Gloria Bendell often invited me to their Sunday School class at church and then to a weekly Care Group meeting. Never before had I witnessed the love of couples for one human being. This was so encouraging, especially in a world of twosomes.

"There is another group of gals that have been a part of my life for years. My Bible study group on Tuesday mornings. Many times Bev Edwards would come to me and say, 'You have been on my heart in prayer at the most strange times.' Or others would say they had held me up in prayer and that they had carried a heavy burden for me. Only a few have actually known the depth of my despair. I thank the Lord that he used these wonderful people to minister to my needs and, through them, I have seen his open arms waiting for me."

God uses broken things

"God uses people to help people. It is God's way to show his love and let us know that we are not alone. People are God's ambassadors who physically serve in his place. When they minister love one to another, it leaves its mark. God's mark."

Carole said that another feeling of turmoil was an attitude of self-condemnation. "I was not only angry with the Lord for the trials, but was angry with myself for having such a crummy attitude," she said. "Frankly, I was sick of all the introspection, the whining, and the feeling of anger itself. I could just picture the Lord carrying this overgrown, immature adult-child down the long path of understanding. He had sent loving people around me and I felt him quietly and lovingly waiting and understanding my emotions, my hurt. Regardless of all of my confused feelings I knew he still loved me."

Promises of God's love and strength

"As the weeks went by, I spent hours in the Scriptures. I copied down every promise that pertained to God's love and strength for me. These verses were put on Rolodex cards for easy access and constant referral. The process of healing was beginning."

She remembers reading in the notes in The Life Recovery Bible: "We don't have to always be strong and pretend to be perfect. We can live a real life, with daily struggles, in a human body beset with weakness, and still find the power from above to keep going without being crushed and broken."

Carole then added, "The Lord's idea of brokenness was maybe different than mine but I would give it my best shot. To be a well and productive Christian was a goal to reach for. Besides that, the Lord uses a lot of broken things. Maybe he could still use my life to glorify his name. This was definitely a wilderness journey, but he knows all about that too."

For Carole Logsdon, she has found, through her pain, some real *Treasures Hidden in the Darkness* and that is the title of the book she is writing about her experiences.

Dan Wooding is an award winning British journalist now living in Southern California with his wife Norma. He is the founder and international director of ASSIST (Aid to Special Saints in Strategic Times).

Christmas

The Song of Mary: Where two worlds meet

Sylvia C. Keesmaat

The World of the Empire

She was overjoyed to finally be on the road, away from her mother's house and the close confines of the village. She took a deep breath; how sweet the early morning air was! It almost settled the queasiness in her stomach. She had found the smells of the house and the village difficult the last few days, and when she suggested to her mother that a visit to her kinswoman Elizabeth was in order, she was relieved to receive permission to go.

"How can I protect this child?" she thought. "How can I keep him from suffering, if he tries to save his people from the empire, and fails?"

She was looking forward to the long walk; it would give her an opportunity to think, to clear her mind a little. She hardly knew what to make of the strange events of the last few days: the angel appearing, the promise of a son, and the language of a king to finally rule over the house of Jacob, one whose kingdom would have no end!

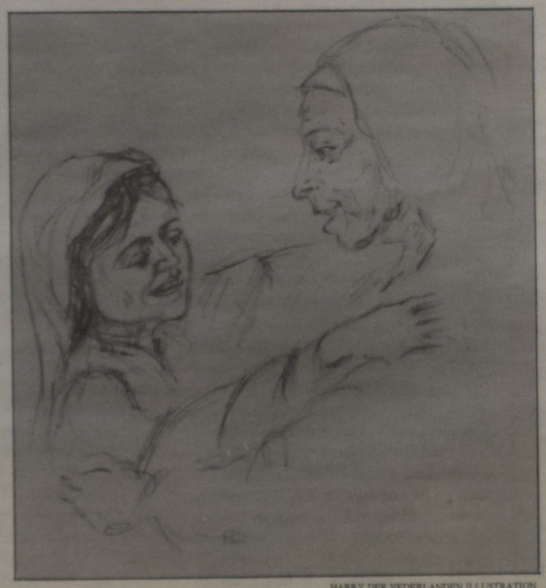
No illusions about Herod

It wasn't that she didn't understand what the angel had said. Of course she longed, as did so many of her people, for the coming of one who would be their king. She was under no illusions about Herod, the one who claimed to be king over her people. She knew where his true allegiances were. Had she not been to Sepphoris, not ten miles from Nazareth, with her father, and seen the statues to the emperor there? Had not Herod built a city, named after Caesar, his true lord?

She knew the language that was used to praise Caesar on the palaces that Herod had built: "Augustus Caesar, Son of God, who has restored the whole earth, Savior, who put an end to war throughout the earth, who has wiped away sickness and who instituted the Golden Age for the whole of the world."

Brutal murders

But she also knew what the peace of this Caesar, and of the king who worshipped him, was like. She thought of the brutality with which he had murdered the Pharisees who had refused to pledge their loyalty to king and emperor. She remembered the day that the soldiers had arrived in her village, looking for those who spoke against the king, taking as prisoner some of their most devout teachers who dared to say that they had no king but God. She thought of the impossible taxes that she and her people had to pay to maintain this false king, and to pay for the building of fortresses throughout Galilee. She remembered the day her father, no longer able to pay the temple tax and the taxes of Caesar and Herod, had given up their ancestral land to the tax collectors. This was no Golden Age for her people, and that



HARRY DER NEDERLANDEN ILLUSTRATION

if Caesar and Herod considered themselves saviors, they were saviors only of the rich and the proud, she reflected bitterly.

She could think of only one good thing that had come out of Herod's rule. Joseph had come to Nazareth. His father, too, had lost their ancestral land — in Bethlehem. And so, Joseph, seeking work as a laborer, had come to Nazareth. He had been working as a carpenter and stonemason on the garrison in Sepphoris when he visited her father in the village. And now they were betrothed.

With the thought of Joseph, she remembered again the promise of the angel. A king to be born to her. How would she explain this to Joseph? Did she dare explain it, even to him? She knew what would happen if she began to talk about the birth of a king, one who would be called the Son of the Most High, whose kingdom would have no end. She knew that Herod's spies were everywhere. At the first rumor of a king, they would move brutally to kill herself and her child. She almost wished the angel's words were not true.

In the midst of her excitement she was suddenly weighed down with the fear of motherhood, with the responsibility of this new and fragile life. she saw suddenly all the possibilities for suffering, for violence, for abuse.

"How can I protect this child?" she thought. "How can I keep him from suffering, if he tries to save his people from the empire, and fails?"

The counter-world of the Song of Mary

As she hurried along the road, she felt an enormous sense of relief that she was going to see Elizabeth. To be sure, the angel had not said that Elizabeth would understand, but the angel had mentioned her as part of the promise. Surely it would be safe to talk of a coming king to Elizabeth. And as she drew closer she thought of Elizabeth, barren for so many years, now nurturing new life within her.

She remembered the stories of other mothers in the faith, those who gave birth after years of barren emptiness. Sarah, mother of Isaac, the father of a nation; Rachel, mother of Joseph, the savior of the nation; and Hannah, mother of Samuel, the prophet, who chose and anointed a king for the nation.

She pondered this maternal calling to give birth to newness, to conceive, nurture and carry those who would enable God's promises to continue, God's new world to be born, God's rule to be established.

And then she remembered the other women, those who helped bring salvation themselves, not through their children: Shiprah and Puah, midwives who defied the Pharaoh and nurtured new life; Deborah, the prophet; Jael, who saved her people by driving a tent-peg into Sisera's head; Esther, who flattered the king to save her kin; and Judith, who seduced the enemy commander and then cut off his head. All of them women who acted for salvation in the face of great brutality, and who were blessed by God for doing so.

Songs of hope and liberation

Thinking of such women lifted her spirits. Since God's angel had come and promised a king through her, she reasoned, then Herod was no longer king and Rome was no longer her ruler. Her savior, her Lord, her king, was the God of Abraham, who had promised blessing through his people Israel. In this mood she continued her journey, humming as she went. Occasionally she sang the songs of hope and liberation that had been sung by the women before her: the songs of Miriam, Deborah and Hannah. Such songs were stronger than the might of the empire.

Even so, she was feeling quite fatigued when she reached the house, much more than she'd expected. As she entered, Elizabeth rose with a cry and exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord!"

Taken aback

She was taken aback. Really, it was as though Elizabeth had been reading her mind! Not only did Elizabeth startlingly echo the blessings given to Jael and Judith, which she had been humming only moments ago on the road, Elizabeth was also speaking the language of subversion, calling her the mother of her Lord!

Mary was overcome with joy, she had indeed come to the right place. Here she would be able to talk of her hopes — and her fears. Here she would be able to envision and speak of that new world for which she and her people yearned, that world where God is king, where emperors and their client-kings are deposed, and where the lowly are gently lifted and held close to God's breasts. It would be a world where the hungry are not only fed but filled with all measure of good things, and the rich, who have feasted so lavishly on the spoils of the poor, would be sent away empty. Israel would be free to fulfil the promises made to Abraham, free to serve God in her own land, free to obey the covenantal laws of sabbath and Jubilee and to care for the community. Then at last Israel would be a blessing for the nations around her as Isaiah had prophecied.

Mary could not contain her joy and hope; it burst out in unexpected song:

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my Spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the mighty one has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promises he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his descendants forever.
Amen.

God wants you rich

It doesn't seem to happen as much anymore. You still see it now and then, though. In the States mostly. Athletes publicly giving thanks to God for their performance. A football player being interviewed might say something like, "I just want to give praise to my personal Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, for this victory" or something like that. You might also see a college basketball or football team (again, usually in the States) huddled together before a game praying. Refreshing, isn't it?

We need to take a closer look

It is refreshing but I think we need to take a closer look at what some successful Christian athletes are selling.

For decades, Christian professional athletes have been coming out of the closet to give their testimonies. There's been lots of them, like David Robinson from the San Antonio Spurs, Michael Chang (the championship tennis player), and Jonathon Edwards (one of the world's great track and field stars). All of them declare over and over again how God has enabled them to overcome adversity and enjoy success.

I came across a couple of stories recently about successful Christians in sports on a website called *Christian Sports Flash*. One was about Florida State University's head baseball coach Mike Martin. The writer of the story talked about the winning attitude and faith of Martin, the second 'winningest' coach of all active college coaches. The second story was about Irving Fryar, a wide receiver for the Philadelphia Eagles. Fryar says God has taken him from "the bottom to the top in my personal and professional life."

Really hardcore humanism

The message that seems to resonate in this is that believing in God leads to success. What it really is is hardcore humanism. It's the doctrine of modern America and its mantra is quite simple and attractive — put your faith in God, and He will reward you with unlimited success.

What a sham. This isn't much different from the drivel that Robert H. Schuller (the dad) and Robert A. Schuller (the nauseatingly slick son) push on their viewers week after week on *The Hour of Power*. I've watched the show a couple of times this fall just for fun. The first time, Robert Schuller Jr. gave a "sermon" on making our bodies all they can be. He pointed out that God gave us bodies to honor Him; our natural response, of course, should be to look good and push ourselves to our physical best. The second time I watched the show, Robert Sr. had a big investor guy on the stage. He was living proof that if you give enough to Christian organizations, God will reward you with more abundant wealth than you can ever imagine. In a couple weeks, Tommy Lasorda will be on the show to give his testimony. Should be an interesting story from the long-time L.A. Dodgers manager.

This stuff sells of course. We love successful people, and anything that can make us more like them is worth believing. I think the part in the Bible about Christ humbling himself and being a servant got missed in the stampede.

There's no doubt that we need Christians in professional sports. It would just be nice if they were involved in more redeeming business than preaching about personal and professional success. Imagine if they were more involved in big issues like salaries, lobbying league officials and team owners to bring integrity into the equation at the expense of their own bottom line. How about fighting for biblically-based ethics in sports marketing? It'd be enough to make both of the Schullers cringe.

Tim Antonides teaches Grade 8 and is a basketball coach at SurreyChristian School in Surrey, B.C.

Youth in former communist countries not faring well

ROME (ZENIT.org) — One fourth of the 65 million youth who live in former Communist European countries neither work nor study, and drug use and suicide among young people is rising, a UNICEF report says.

Of those ages 15-24, 26 million, or 41 per cent, study; 21 million, or 32 per cent, work; and 18 million, or 27 per cent, neither study nor work, according to "Youth in Transition Societies," a report done by UNICEF's Innocenti research center. The research covers Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Illegal work networks

According to the report, of the 67 million children between the ages of five and 14 in 1989, "close to one million left the region before 1999. Some have found better opportunities in other parts of the world, but others have been involved in illegal work networks or sexual commerce."

A half-million young people have died, the report said, and the rate of infant mortality "has increased in 11 countries, especially in the U.S.S.R."

From 1989 to 1998, the rate of suicides among male youths between the ages of 15 and 24 increased "and has more than doubled in Lithuania, Byelorussia, Russia and Turkmenistan." This rate is also "especially high in Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan," the report said.

Every year, 10,000 young men and 2,000 girls commit suicide, while another 5,000 boys and 1,500 girls are killed violently, the report said.

Many youth take drugs

Research carried out last year revealed that one-fourth of the 16-year-old male youths in Hungary had taken drugs of some kind. In Kazakhstan, the rate of those who have tried drugs has increased from two per cent in 1994 to 12 per cent two years later.

In 1998, 85,000 young men between the ages of 15 and 24 died in the whole region, "close to 30 per cent more than in 1989."

"Over the last years, there has been a terrible increase of cases of persons infected with the HIV virus, especially in the former U.S.S.R.," the report underlined. In 1995, there were about 12,000 known cases of all age groups; just three years later, the number rose to 50,000, it said.

From 1989 to 1996, the number of youths ages 15-18 who left school increased by three million, to 9 million, more than a third of the total of this age, the report said.

"In 1998, the average rate of youth unemployment was about 30 per cent. Many of these unemployed youth, more than 40 per cent, have been without work for over a year," the UNICEF document said.

The official data of Communist regimes on criminality was quite low compared to industrialized countries, and still is.

"However," the report said, "the rate of recorded criminality for youths between the ages of 14-17 almost doubled between 1989 and 1998 in 16 of the 25 countries for which there is available data."

Research also disclosed other tendencies: an increase in juvenile crime, especially of delinquents younger than 14, as well as crimes committed under the influence of drugs.

Once in prison, youths are subjected to other dangers. A 1995 investigation of the Ukrainian Ministry of the Interior on imprisoned minors revealed that 30 per cent reported they had been raped.

Sweden's youth revitalizing churches

(Religion Today) — Young Christians are bringing new life to Sweden's churches. Intense prayer and evangelism combined with use of cutting-edge technologies and innovative worship are attracting a new generation to Christ, according to DAWN Fridayfax.

"A growing number of young Christians, on their own or in groups, are starting to plant churches for their generation," Magnus Persson of New Generation International, a ministry to young people, told DAWN. Leaders use the Internet to trade ideas and information about evangelism and church planting, then put those ideas to work in the public square.

More than 10,000 young people came to Stockholm's Globen Stadium for a 27-hour marathon of music, dance, preaching, and prayer in October. Most came to pray that God would turn their generation around, and spent hours making their requests, Persson said. Some invited their non-Christian friends and many of them professed faith in Christ.

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News Comment

Nose for News

Bert Hielema

A SCORPION WANTED TO cross the river Jordan but could not swim, so he asked a frog to carry him across. "Forget it," said the frog, "if I take you on my back, you'll sting me." "Of course, not," said the scorpion, " if I do, we'll both drown."

"That makes sense," said the frog and the scorpion hopped on. Halfway across, he felt a terrible pain. The scorpion had stung. As the two slowly sank to the bottom, the frog gasped: "Why?" Replied the drowning scorpion, "Because this is the Middle East."

Christmas has come and gone and stable and crib scenes in Bethlehem and the word "Peace, Shalom, Pax," have been featured on many a Christmas card, but in Tel Aviv, in the so-called Holy Land, in its tallest tower, spiked with enormous antennas and assorted satellite dishes, military men, computer plotters, political people are exploring the several scenarios their small country could be facing in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. An increasingly likely one is a Middle East melt-down involving not only all Arab nations, but the U.S.A. as well.

THERE IS A STRIKING difference between those who plan military strategy and those who run for political office. The generals always prepare for the worst possibility and design their weaponry accordingly. Even now, the U.S. is planning an anti-missile defense system, costing an initial $60 billion (U.S.), on the remote chance that China or North Korea or even Iraq will attack.

Our politicians employ a different approach. They never dare to bring before us matters which might possibly turn us off, so they always promise the best possible outcome — endless prosperity, pristine environment, unequalled healthcare, less taxes, more benefits — which must give our honorable members a permanent case of 'crossed finger' cramps, hoping that their rosy predictions will come true.

AS WE ENTER THE TRUE new millennium, we just might see a world not to the liking of politicians. Barak has already resigned, paving the way for more extreme elements to solve the Palestinian situation. More and more it has the makings of a disaster and that not only because it is the Middle East. The uprising in Gaza and the West Bank against the continued occupation by Israeli forces has already degenerated into a mini-war, and many now fear that the ultimate aim of the Palestinians is to drive the Jews into the Mediterranean Sea and so rid the Middle East of, what they call, the 'cancer' of Zionism, and return the land to its original Palestinian owners.

Already five different ceasefires have failed, and, after each breakdown attitudes have become more unyielding. If Netanyahu and Bush emerge as leaders of their countries, both blood-brother believers in the power of the sword, then the conflict could easily spin out of control.

That is not the only mad place. The whole world has a touch of it. Look at the U.S. As I write this — December 11 — it is courting disaster through endless legal tactics in its turtle-like crawl to choose their next nominal leader.

OR EUROPE, WHERE Mad Cow Disease has affected mainly the human mind: as usual people suffer most from the suffering they fear. Only a few people — about 80 in eight years — have died from this affliction, compared to 400,000 who have died in car accidents over the same period, which tells me that Europe suffers much more from Mad Car Disease.

The tightness in the oil supply in the world and thus its much higher price could flip the world's economy into a spiral of inflation — the last thing we need now that a slow-down is evident and the world's real president, Alan Greenspan, is under pressure to lower interest rates.

SO THE WORLD FACES not only a creeping environmental disaster, from Mad Car Disease — which requires a new human mentality — but it also must deal with this Middle East time bomb primed for explosion. Disposing of that problem means solving two tricky riddles. First, Israel must be convinced to give back all of the West Bank and Gaza, evacuate the settlements there and give Arafat a country that looks like a geographical entity and not a patchwork. Even more difficult: the Israelis must be persuaded that somehow the Arab world has had a change of heart and no longer wants to annihilate the Jewish State. A virtual impossibility, because the Jews know that if the Arabs said that, they would be lying.

That is the one problem the world faces. I had both letters and phone calls from readers, for which I thank them. In one conversation, touching on "The Hague," the matter of, what I call, our 'sins of emission' came up. If we really want to become serious about reducing greenhouse gases, we must reduce our energy consumption by 50 per cent. You know what 50 per cent means?

It means that we must cut our driving in half or drive much more economical cars. It means that we cut our heating bill in half or insulate our dwellings so efficiently that there is little heat loss. It means that we cut our purchases in half and do with what we have, asking with each purchase: "Do we really need that?" It means that we cut our electrical use in half: turn on the lights only where we need them and use high efficiency lamps. We, you and I and all who care for God's creation, must constantly think energy conservation, which is a religious act because through it we cause a small amount of pollution not to happen. Any act of pollution is an act of sin, something we have to minimize, as eliminating it is an impossibility in our historic situation. So the least we can do each time we turn on a light or drive an automobile is to ask God for forgiveness for our sins of emission. Ridiculous?

Here is a paragraph from an observer of the 'The Hague' conference, written by Bill McKibben who has been widely published in such prestigious magazines as the *New Yorker*. He writes in *Grist Magazine*: "For those of us who have been working on this (climate) issue for a decade or more, it's sometimes hard to imagine that there could be anyone anywhere who does not realize that *the freaking earth is coming to an end.*" (Italics in the original.)

DO YOU UNDERSTAND what he is saying? We, humans, are the agents of destruction of God's creation! A question to church ministers: have you ever preached on the topic: How to prepare the People of God for the New Creation? One of our Reformed rallying cries was Ora et Labora, Pray and Work, and that work increasingly calls for a hands on, direct, immediate, down-to-earth theology of creation fully integrated with the Scriptural doctrines. We, in the Western World, have made either the scholastic-doctrinal or the emotional-pietistic way of worship the norm, both dualistic in nature, both rooted in the past, while the Bible is about the future. Have your church councils ever pushed for a workshop Sunday on "How to live responsibly in God's world?

NOT THAT WE CAN SAVE the earth: we don't have to. Christ has already done that, but we all have to prepare ourselves for a future with Jesus Christ when he reveals himself in the New Creation. That's what Advent is all about and that's basically what the Christian Religion is all about. So, in my opinion, it is part and parcel of our daily worship to live responsibly — responding to the Holy Word which also is Creation. This is just as important as our daily prayer, Bible reading and Sunday worship. Enough. I am probably crying in the ecclesiastical wilderness anyway.

Let me go to a real life issue. Jean Chretien.

OUR PROUD PRIME MINISTER has promised to make his next four years "The term of the child," especially the neglected ones in the North, our native children. If I remember correctly, in his previous 8 years, he has done very little of anything, accept clarify what Ottawa will do when Quebec wins a separation referendum, now a remote possibility.

"So Monsieur Chretien, allow me to direct these remarks to you directly. It is commendable to decry the misery of the poor native children, especially while addressing the rich who paid $1,000 per head to witness your wise words. If you are really serious about the plight of the Inuit, perhaps a few observations might focus your mind.

"As the Inuit parents of the children you are so concerned about travel over the tundra or try to harvest fish from the sea, they have noticed that the freeze-up comes about one month later than usual and the spring thaw comes earlier, while the sea-ice, thin and broken, now drifts away from their communities taking with it the seals and fresh drinking water upon which these families rely. It also makes travel there much more dangerous. In the fall, storms are more frequent and severe, an added hazard for boating. Even thunder and lightning are now normal.

"Hot weather in the summer is melting the permafrost, causing building foundations to shift and releasing methane, a dangerous ingredient in global warming, while flies and mosquitoes are making life difficult for humans and animals.

"So, Mister Prime Minister, if you were to ask WWTD — What Would Trudeau Do — (who was not afraid to take on vested interests), if you are really concerned about the children of Canada and their future, the most eloquent and tangible measure you could introduce in your government would be a speedy and effective approach to combat greenhouse gases, which now already have caused a 25 per cent increase in asthma attacks in all Canadian children, and will threaten them even more in many ways long after you are gone. You, unlike the American President, have near-dictatorial powers. What you say and want happens, which places a great responsibility on your shoulders, and future generations will judge you by what you did or did not do. Please don't add to the hot air there or anywhere: we already have too much of that."

Bert Hielema will not yet comment on the American Presidential Comedy, except to say that it is fascinating. He will stay put in Tweed for at least 5 months. Happy 2001 to all.

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- News Canada

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Postmortem - and the voucher fiasco

Ty Hofman

Nearing the middle of December, the U.S. still did not have a President-elect, though Governor George W. Bush has been certified as the winner of the election by Florida's Secretary of State. The Governor has claimed the election but is waiting for the courts to deal with the legal challenges of Vice President Gore before beginning any celebration. In the meantime, everyone is speculating about the election and how it was won and lost. That discussion will go on for months. The country has never experienced a more dramatic and titanic struggle to elect a president.

The vote was very close in the state of Michigan but Governor Bush and the Republicans lost a crucial election. It was a serious blow that Senator Abrahams was defeated, helping, very likely, to throw the U.S. Senate into a 50-50 tie which will seriously handicap the next president, whoever he is, from being able to put through his program.

But the partisan battle was not unrelated to a state-wide Proposal #1 which was placed on the ballot in an attempt to gain public support for educational vouchers for parents of children in failing public schools. The vouchers would have been for use in schools of the parents' choice, including Christian and other private religious schools. Such a voucher would have provided $3,000 for any parent not able to afford private school tuition with a child in a failing school.

Denied because of church/state separation

Private school parents have for years sought public support for their schools, but it has always been denied on the principle of separation of church and state. However, in recent years, ways and means have been worked out that a voucher system could very well pass muster. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, under the leadership of Governor Thompson, such vouchers are being given. That led people in Michigan to conclude that it should be possible to do the same here.

After Proposal #1 was drawn up, the campaign to pass it was powered by Dick and Betsy De Vos of Amway through their charitable foundation. Betsy De Vos, as chairman of the Michigan Republican party, sought the support of Governor John Engler, a good friend of Governor Thompson and considered to be sympathetic to the idea of vouchers. But Engler refused to go along for political reasons. He feared that an election which included the question of educational vouchers would be extremely partisan, with the public school teachers' union (the Michigan Education Association) fiercely opposed and bringing out all its power plus that of all the other unions in the State. That, he thought, would bring out large numbers of Democrats who might otherwise not be motivated to vote, which might result in a Republican defeat in a hotly contested election. Therefore he urged that the voucher issue not be raised this year.

A vicious campaign

The Proposal leaders insisted on going ahead, with Betsy resigning her post in the party, and Engler and the Republican apparatus, and the Democrats, coming out against vouchers. Several millions of dollars were spent in advertising on the voucher issue alone, mainly by the Amway Foundation and the Roman Catholic Church, and for the opposition by the MEA and assorted liberal organizations.

It was a vicious campaign, in which De Vos was suspected of trying to promote himself, or herself, for future political office; it was labeled as an underhanded movement to help the rich private schools dip into the public coffer. Of course it was a violation of the Constitution. And it wouldn't enable the poor to send their children to private schools since the $3,000 would only cover about 75 per cent of the cost of education.

But the clincher was that this would rob the public schools of their much needed funds and lead to their destruction. That was to touch the most popular god in the American pantheon. Even the bleeding heart liberals were fulminating against such help for the poor. Of course, they refused to hear the plain truth that every child leaving the public school system would cost the state only $3,000 while its cost of educating each student in the system is more than $6,000. And they refused to hear the plea for some justice and freedom of choice for parents locked into poverty areas with wretched schools.

No call for free choice in education

"A woman's freedom of choice" is the mantra of the liberals who rejoiced in Clinton's veto of a bill to outlaw partial-birth abortions. But there is no call for free choice for parents praying that their children might receive a decent education, let alone a Christian education.

The net result was a two-to-one defeat at the polls. Engler may have been a coward of course, but he was a smart one. What he was afraid of did happen. The De Voses and their supporters were brave and beautifully motivated, but they were not savvy to the wiles of politics. They should have waited for two years when there was no presidential or senatorial vote in the balance.

It could well be that had they listened to Engler, they might have gained his future support. And the cause of vouchers would have fared much better with more time to refine the proposal and to educate the public. Now it may have suffered a death blow.

But no one can fault the motivation of Dick and Betsy De Vos and their supporters. It has been rather reliably reported that the foundation is giving 60,000 scholarships annually to needy families in eastern Michigan. What size of scholarship was not stated. Even $1,000 each would result in over a half-billion dollars from the foundation. But that was not the big problem to De Vos. What is a problem is the large number of applications which they have to deny because of the limitations even of Amway.

All of this makes it crystal clear that the public support of private and Christian education is a matter of simple justice in a society that lavishly provides for the education of all of its other children and sends the bill to everyone, even to the poor. Yes, lavishly, compared with even the most well-financed Christian schools in Michigan. But the monopolistic stranglehold of the MEA over the educational system runs roughshod over justice. It lives by power politics.

Ty Hofman is an expatriate Yankee-Canuck.

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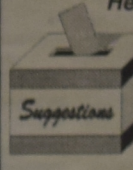

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Church News

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Any questions?

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Anniversary

1950 December 28 2000

As a family, we are grateful to the Lord that He has given 50 years of marriage to

HANK and FEMMIGJE LUIMES
(nee VANDORSTEN)

We pray that God will continue to bless them. We invite you to share in an anniversary celebration, the Lord willing, at an Open House, on Saturday, December 30, 2000, from 2 - 4 p.m. at the Second Christian Reformed Church of Brampton.

Congratulations and much love from your children and grandchildren:

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Obituary

Beets Cambridge
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April 13, 1927 - November 24, 2000

"He is Lord, He is Lord,
He is risen from the dead and
He is Lord,
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess,
That Jesus Christ is Lord."

At the celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary on Nov.24, 2000, the Lord called home

GERALD DEGIER

in his 74th year.

Loving husband of Tina DeGier (nee DeKryger).

Beloved father and grandfather of:

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Church News

Christian Reformed Church

Classis British Columbia South-East examined Merwin Rylaarsdam and with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies declares him to be a candidate for the ministry according to CO Art. 7 and highly recommend him to the churches. His address is:

Merwin Rylaarsdam, 1907 Heartland Drive, Lynden, WA 98264. Phone 360-354-8404.

Gerrit J. Veeneman, Stated Clerk.

Obituaries

"In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you." (John 14:2)

On November 22, 2000, the Lord called home

JOHN PETER SLIK

at the age of 82 years, at Peel Memorial Hospital in Brampton, formerly of Kitchener.

Loving husband of Marion, and dear father of:

Marjo & Ben Merkus — Kitchener, Ont.
Peter Slik — Calgary, Alta.
Nick Slik — Calgary, Alta.
Emil Slik — Calgary, Alta.

Loving grandfather of six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Predeceased by his parents and only brother Kees, of the Netherlands.

The funeral service was held on Saturday, Nov.25, 2000, at Community Christian Reformed Church in Kitchener, Ont. Pastor P. VanEgmond officiated. Interment at Woodlawn Cemetery, Kitchener, Ont.

Correspondence address: Mrs. Marion Slik, 305-35 Kingknoll Dr., King Tower, Brampton, ON L6Y 5G5

JACOB VANDER VEER

"You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you." (Isa.26:3)

On November 30, 2000, the Lord took our much loved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather to be with Him. He was 90 years old.

Deeply missed by his wife of 62 years, Anna Vander Veer-Heidinga, and his children:

Ed & Hennie Vander Veer — Ottawa
Hennie & Jim Visser — Brampton
Ruth & Marcel Dorey — Kincardine
Sadie & Hans VanManen — Oshawa
Tim & Melinda Vander Veer — Cornwall

Beloved Pake of Jack and Anita, Mary Ann and Jeff, Michael, Kevin, Annette, Tanya and Gareth, Caroline and Scott, Angela and David, David and Jane, Rick, Sara, Rob, Glenn and Debbie, Rodney, Matthew and Natasha.

Wonderful Great-Pake of 11 great-grandchildren.

He will be missed by his sister, Tine (de Wit) of the Netherlands, and many brothers and sisters-in-law in Canada and the Netherlands.

Predeceased by his parents, Imke Vander Veer & Ruurdtje Walma, two brothers and one sister.

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Correspondence address: Anna Vander Veer, 7900 McLaughlin Rd. S, TT 517, Brampton, ON L6Y 5A7

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Phase 2 consists of another 66 unit apartment building, and reservations are now being accepted. This Phase which is approximately 70% reserved is now under construction and scheduled for occupancy in the late Fall of 2001.

Information, guided tours of Phase 1 and an opportunity to reserve one of the remaining units in Phase 2 will be available. Refreshments will also be served.

If you or any of your family members are interested in knowing more about Tollendale Village, come and visit us at the Open House to obtain a complete package of information as to how you might become a part of this exciting and vibrant Christian Retirement Community. If you are unable to come to the Open House, you can reach us at any time by contacting:

Mr Sid Tjeerdsma, Executive Director
271 Tollendal Mill Road
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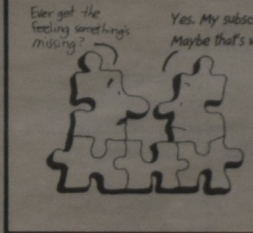
Tel: 705-722-0469

Tollendale Village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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Niagara Association for Christian Education was established in 1999 and serves over 430 students enrolled in grades K to 8 at two campuses in the Niagara region: Fruitland John Knox Memorial Christian School and the Smithville Covenant Christian School.

We are seeking a visionary Executive Director to administer the operation of our two campuses under the direction of the board. The successful candidate will lead an administrative team of two part-time principals. We are committed to operating under a Policy Governance model to be implemented in August 2001.

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Saskatoon Christian School
Attn: Carolyn Van Ee
2410 Haultain Avenue
Saskatoon, SK S7J 1R3
e-mail: hcvanee@sk.sympatico.ca
Ph: 306-384-0208
Fax: 306-978-1859
Application deadline: January 31, 2001

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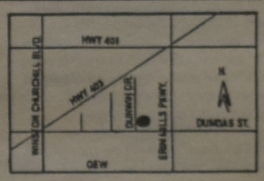

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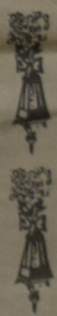

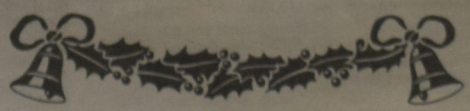

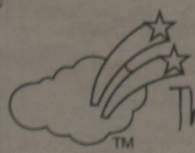

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Gift-Giving Ideas

Your kids can help grant a wish

(NC)—With gift-giving, it is always the thought that counts. But in some cases, the thought is more effective if accompanied by an example.

Many of us have no idea, for instance, how many seriously ill children there are in Canada facing the harsh realities of a high risk, life-threatening illness. But if we were told — or if we told our kids — that as a family we could all help to put a smile back on a sick child's face, there may be no finer example this Christmas to the true meaning of giving.

Some families are deciding to give up one gift per person and then accumulate the dollars saved to send to The Children's Wish Foundation of Canada. Last year, the non-profit organization fulfilled as many as 650 wishes for children afflicted with a high risk, life- threatening illness, and each year the wish list grows.

Give as a family

The gesture of giving to an unknown child can be far more fun and meaningful if it is organized into a planned, family event. Perhaps on the day that letters are written to Santa Clause, the family can gather to discuss the meaning of the season, the importance of giving and not directly receiving, and which presents can be given up, so that as a family you can make a real difference.

"Each wish is an individual adventure, carefully structured to meet the needs of a particular child," says the Foundation's executive director, Laura Cole. "It may be arranging a trip to a far away destination, providing a customized computer for a child with special needs, tracking down a favourite sports celebrity, or finding just the right puppy. Wishes cannot alter the situation but contemplating all the possibilities is a wonderful distraction from the realities of coping with the illness. A family becomes involved in the discussion, the planning, and so the focus is shifted instead to the anticipation of an up-coming, happy experience."

Perhaps you have a child, or your family knows of a child who needs a dream like this to come true. All cases should first be referred to the Foundation and from there eligibility for the program is determined. Anyone looking to make a referral, or wishing to support The Children's Wish Foundation of Canada, can call toll-free, 1-800-267-9474, or visit their website at www.childrenswish.ca.

- News Canada

Classifieds

Job Opportunities

The Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools invites applications for the position of:

Director of Development:

This senior position is responsible for designing and implementing fundraising programs to sustain the development of Christian curriculum in Canada.

Additional responsibilities include promotion advocacy and communications as well as curriculum design.

The successful candidate will have vision for Christian education, a broad range of education experience in Alliance schools and a working knowledge of finances and fundraising.

Inquiries and/or Resumé should be sent to:

Dr. Adrian Guldemond, Executive Director
Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools
617 Garner Rd. E., Ancaster ON L9G 3K9
Fax: 905-648-2110 or email: adriang@oacs.org

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Christian Reformed World Missions

Christian Reformed World Missions, an agency of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, is beginning a search for an Executive Director. This position is responsible for the administration of the agency, including all of its overseas missions.

The successful candidate shall be capable of providing visionary leadership and have demonstrated experience and training in missiology, theology and organizational management. A working knowledge of and membership in the Christian Reformed Church is required. A detailed position description is available upon request.

Nominations are welcome and, to be fully considered, need to be received by January 31, 2001. Applications are also solicited and, to be fully considered, need to be received no later than February 15, 2001, (please include a resume and letter stating your interest.) All inquiries and applications will be treated as confidential information. Please submit both nominations and applications to:

The Christian Reformed World Mission
Search Committee
c/o 2850 Kalamazoo Ave SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
Telephone: 616-224-0832
Fax: 616-224-5895

PACIFIC CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
VICTORIA, B.C.
seeks a
SECONDARY PRINCIPAL

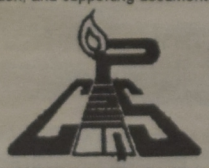
Pacific Christian School is a well-established, dynamic and growing, inter-denominational Christian School system with nearly 800 students in Pre-School through Grade 12. The school draws its enrolment from 80 different churches representing 15 denominations in the greater Victoria area.

A secondary principal is required for September 2001 to direct, implement and co-ordinate the total educational program of the secondary school in close co-operation with the Board, Education Committee and staff. The secondary school has a staff of 25 and an enrolment of 330 students in grades 8-12.

Celebrating our 40th anniversary this year, P.C.S, is looking for **an innovative, visionary principal** to guide the further development of the school. The principal must be a committed Christian, be a team player, be committed to professional development, and be able to articulate a clear vision of Christian education. This person is expected to demonstrate spiritual, educational, and administrative leadership. Responsibilities include developing positive community and staff relationships. P.C.S, seeks a principal with a minimum of four years of successful experience in Christian school leadership.

By December 31, 2000, please direct your inquiries and forward your resume, a statement of your vision of Christian education, and supporting documents to:

Bill Bomhof,
Chair of the Principal Search Committee
c/o Pacific Christian Secondary School
654 Agnes St, Victoria, B.C., V8Z 2E6
Phone: (250) 479-4532
Fax: (250) 479-3511
E-mail: pcshs@islandnet.com



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Christian Reformed Church in North America

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) is seeking applicants for the position of

HOME MISSIONS REGIONAL CO-DIRECTOR

for central and Eastern Canada. Responsibilities include new church development leadership in the region, campus ministry support, and collaboration of ministry with Home Missions Regional Co-Director for established church development. In addition, this position may entail representation on various ministry teams for Home Missions at the CRC offices in Canada and U.S. The regional co-director will have an appropriate educational and professional background, experience in church-related ministries, and management experience in Christian not-for-profit organizations and organizational leadership skills are preferred qualifications. Membership in the Christian Reformed Church is required.

To confidentially apply for this position or receive a position description, please submit by **February 15, 2001** a copy of your resume and a letter stating your interest to:

Director of Personnel
3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8 Canada
Telephone:616-224-5881 / Fax: 616-224-5896
Email: colemann@crcna.org

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Classifieds

Teachers

REXDALE, ONT.:
Timothy Christian School in Rexdale, Ontario (a suburb of Toronto), is looking for a **Grade 7 teacher** to fill a Parental Leave from **mid-March to the end of May, 2001.** Computer skills would be an asset. For more information, please contact the principal:

Trudy Jager
28 Elmhurst Dr., Rexdale ON
M9W 2J5
Phone: 416-741-5770

BRESLAU, Ont:
Woodland Christian High School has a definite one year opening in **History** and **English** for the 2001 - 2002 school year. Due to anticipated growth there may be openings in other teaching areas as well. Inquires from teachers of Mathematics and Science are especially encouraged. The ability to coach team sports will be a definite asset. Please direct applications and inquiries to:

Gary Van Arragon, Principal
Woodland Christian High School
R.R.#1, Breslau, Ontario,
N0B 1M0
519-648-2114
Fax: 519-648-3402
E-Mail: office@woodland.on.ca

THE NIAGARA ASSOCIATION FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
operating John Knox Memorial Christian School in Fruitland and Covenant Christian School in Smithville is seeking applicants for a 75% **Music position** beginning February 1,2001. This position includes teaching music in Grades 4 through 8 at both sites. Experience in developing and implementing our Band program would be an asset. Send inquires or letters of application by **January 15** to:

Mr. Sid Bakker,
Covenant Christian School,
6470 Regional Rd.#14,
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0
905-957-7796

Home sweet classifieds!

Job Opportunity

Classis Chatham Youth Ministry Committee has an opening for a half-time (20 hours/week)
CLASSICAL YOUTH COORDINATOR
to promote and advocate an effective Youth Ministry for and within our Classis. Please forward resumes to, or for a complete job description contact, Ron Hosmar, Chair of the Classis Chatham Classical Youth Ministry Team.
Ron Hosmar,1281 Exmouth St.
Sarnia, Ontario, N7S 1W9
519-337-6485 Office
519-337-3008 Fax
(email)ronscrcy@ebtech.net

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ServiceLink Canada

Carol Sybenga
3475 Mainway
PO Box 5070 Stn. LCD1
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8
1(800)730-3490
Sybengac@crcna.ca

ServiceLink US

Ruth Buntin
2850 Kalamazoo SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560-0001
1(800)280-5275 ext. 739
1(800)552-7972
buntinr@crcna.org

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DORDT COLLEGE

FACULTY POSITIONS

Dordt College is seeking applications for openings beginning 2001-2002 in the following areas:

Art
Fine arts; emphasis graphic design or art education

Communication (Two year position)
Mass communication; introductory speaking/listening

Education
Introduction, upper-level, and possibly graduate levels with emphasis on special education

Foreign Language
Spanish

Psychology
General/Applied

Social Work (Temporary positions with possibility for regular appointment)
Generalist; micro-practice background; methods courses & field practice
Generalist; macro-practice background; public policy, and/or research

Theatre Arts
Theatre generalist, theatre history emphasis

Evaluation of applications will continue until the positions are filled. To learn more about a position and receive application materials, qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and a curriculum vitae/resume to:

Dr. Rockne McCarthy
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dordt College
498 4th Avenue NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697

Facsimile: 712 722-4496
E-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu
Web site:
www.dordt.edu/offices/acadaff

Dordt College encourages the nominations and candidacies of women, minorities, and persons with disabilities.

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Calendar of Events

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

Dec. 23	Christmas Concert choirs and band Ontario Chr.Music Assembly, director Leendert Kooij, Andre Knevel, organ, **Willowdale,** Ont. Willowdale United Church, 7:30 p.m. (Adults $10, Students $6, children under 12 FREE) Call the OCMA 416-636-9779
2001	
Jan. 26 and 27	Pre-marriage seminar – at First Christian Reformed Church, **Guelph.** For information or to register, call 519-822-7720
Mar. 23-25	East CRC of **Strathroy,** Ont. 50th Anniversary Celebration weekend. Dinner Fri. evening; Sat. Open House and Evening Program; Sun. special worship services. Call Rie VanSteeg for dinner reservations or more info 519-245-6785 or e-mail: secretary@eastcrc.org.

Avoid winter road woes — maintain your vehicle

(NC)—A well-maintained vehicle is a reliable vehicle — and reliability is no more important than in the dead of winter, when a roadside breakdown can cause enormous inconvenience for you and your family and possibly place you in a dangerous situation.

Aside from the potential inconvenience and safety issues, there's another good reason to keep your car in top running condition in winter. Cold weather is hard on a vehicle, making the engine work harder to achieve its maximum operating temperature and move the car down icy, snow-covered roads. The harder the engine works, the more fuel it burns and the more pollution it generates.

A regular fall/winter checkup is an important starting point for your maintenance regime. A qualified technician should check the condition of spark plugs, the air and fuel filters, battery connections, engine belts, tire, brakes, ignition system, cooling system as well as all fluid levels.

Between scheduled vehicle checkups, you can head-off problems by taking a few minutes once a month to check engine fluid levels, tire pressure, spark plug wires, battery terminals and radiator hoses and clamps. Have anything that looks suspicious checked by your technician. Also, using a block heater to pre-warm the engine reduces engine wear and cuts fuel consumption.

For more information on the importance of proper vehicle maintenance for safe, affordable winter driving, visit the Auto$mart Web site at http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca/vehicles/ or call 1-800-387-2000 for your free Auto$mart Guide.

- News Canada

CALVIN COLLEGE

The Calvin College Education Department is re-opening the search for candidates for a **tenure-track position starting in August 2001**. The position primarily involves teaching reading and reading across the curriculum at the undergraduate and graduate level. It is expected that all full-time faculty assume responsibilities for academic advising, curriculum development, committee service, and research and professional scholarship.

Qualifications include: 1) an earned doctorate (or ABD) in reading; 2) recent K-12 teaching and/or administration experience; 3) a scholarship agenda; and 4) commitment to a Reformed Christian expression of faith.

Calvin College is a Christian college within the Reformed tradition of historic Christianity and is an equal opportunity employer. The College encourages the application of women and minority candidates. Interested applicants should forward a letter stating qualifications and curriculum vitae to:

Dr. L. Steginк
Department Chair, Education Department
Calvin College
3201 Burton Street SE
Grand Rapids MI 49546

Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

FROM COAST TO COAST

English Radio: ***Back to God Hour***

Television: ***Primary Focus***

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Burns Lake - CFLO	9:15 am	1400
Osoyoos - CJOR	8:00 am	1490
Penticton - CKOR	8:00 am	800
Port Alberni - CJAV	7:00 pm	1240
Prince George - CIRX	7:00 am	94.3
Princeton - CHOR	8:00 am	1400
Smithers - CFBV	9:15 am	1230
Summerland - CHOR	8:00 am	1450
Vernon - CJIB	9:30 pm	940

ALBERTA

Brooks - CIBQ	8:00 am	1340
Ft. McMurray-CJOK	8:30 am	1230
High River - CHRB	6:30 pm	1140
Edmonton - CJCA	6:00 pm	930
Westlock - CFOK	7:30 am	1370

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan - CJSL	8:00 am	1280
Weyburn - CFSL	8:00 am	1190

MANITOBA

Altona - CFAM	9:30 am	950
Steinbach - CHSM	8:00 am	1250
Winnipeg - CKJS	9:15 am	810

ONTARIO

Atikokan - CHAK	9:30 am	1240
Chatham - CFCO	6:30 am	630
Fort Frances - CFOB	9:30 am	640
Guelph - CJOY	8:30 am	1460
Hamilton - CHAM	7:30 am	820
Kapuskasing - CKAP	7:00 am	580
Kingston - WBDR	7:30 am	102.7
London - CKSL	7:00 am	1410
Newmarket - CKDX	9:00 am	88.5
Oshawa - CKDO	8:00 am	1350
Owen Sound -CFOS	7:00 am	560
Pembroke - CHVR	10:00 am	96.7
Sarnia - CHOK	7:30 am	1070
Stratford - CJCS	8:30 am	1240
Windsor - CKLW	7:30 am	800
Wingham - CKNX	10:30 am	920

NEW BRUNSWICK

Saint John - CHSJ	9:00 am	94.1

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Charlottetown - CFCY	7:00 am	630

NOVA SCOTIA

Bridgewater -- CKBW	7:30 am	1000
Digby - CKDY	6:00 am	1420
Halifax - CFDR	8:30 am	780
Liverpool -- CKBW	7:30 am	94.5
Kentville - CKEN	8:30 am	1490
Middleton - CKAD	8:30 am	1350
NewGlasgow -CKEC	7:30 am	1320
Shelburne -- CKBW	7:30 am	93.1
Sydney - CJCB	7:00 am	1270
Weymouth - CKDY	8:30 am	103.1

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Saturday - 3:00 pm

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Tuesday - 9:00 am

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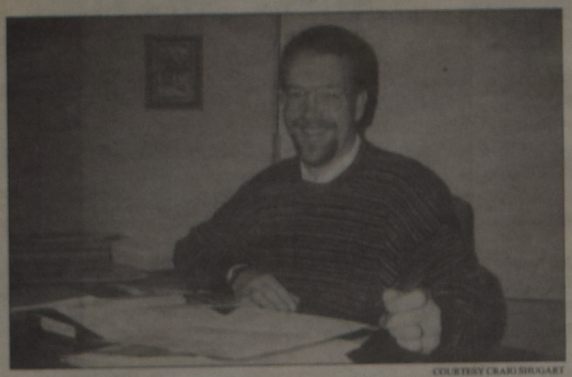
News

Tentmaking work becoming more crucial in 'closed' countries



COURTESY CRAIG SHUGART

Craig Shugart, executive director of Interserve.

Alan Doerksen

RICHMOND HILL, Ont. — As more countries become closed to traditional Christian mission work, the importance of tentmaking is increasing. In Canada, Interserve and the Canadian Tentmaker Network are mobilizing Christian professionals into what they see as crucial work in countries closed to the Gospel.

Not everyone has the same idea of what a tentmaker is. "We would define a tentmaker as a Christian who deliberately moves into a cross-cultural ministry context in which they are using their professional and marketplace skills as their platform for life and witness among those people," explains Craig Shugart, executive director of Interserve. "We believe quite strongly that the work the tentmaker does is holy."

Good tentmakers will model Christ and the Gospel to others, and "make relationships with people who probably would be outside the reach of others," says Shugart. "The term tentmaker is most useful when applied to a deliberate cross-cultural missionary effort, where there is accountability, support, prayer." Shugart sees tentmakers as working primarily in countries other than Canada, but adds that a person working deliberately among Somalis in Toronto, for instance, could also be seen as a tentmaker.

Interserve describes itself as an international, interdenominational fellowship of Christian professionals who integrate their faith with their professions and work in "closed" countries. "Our focus is primarily in sending tentmakers to parts of the world where major unreached people groups reside," explains Shugart. Interserve focuses mainly on the Middle East and Asia, regions where it has worked for about 150 years.

Danger of Lone Rangers

"We are strongly committed to the concept of teams," asserts Shugart, who warns against the danger of "Lone Ranger-ism." When Interserve sends a tentmaker to a megacity in Asia, for instance, he or she "would become part of a functioning team. They would be providing logistical support, fellowship, worship."

Interserve equips tentmakers in several ways, such as providing pastoral and logistical support. "We outsource a lot of our training and orientation" with referrals to secular universities or Bible colleges, explains Shugart. He and his wife run a discussion and mentoring group for potential tentmakers. Shugart also suggests prospective tentmakers take a trip to a country of interest to get a feel for it, and to check out employment possibilities.

Shugart admits there are not a lot of resources "out there" to help tentmakers. Tentmaking is even more marginalised than missions among churches, he suggests.

Asked if more nations are becoming closed to missionaries, Shugart asserts, "There's no doubt about it. [Of] the countries we're involved with, virtually none of them will give visas to mission workers. But every one of these nations is open to business and entrepreneurial initiatives."

Any professional can be tentmaker

A newer organization focusing on tentmaking is the Canadian Tentmaking Network (CTN), a ten-year-old agency which describes itself as "a Canada-wide association of individuals and groups committed to developing, encouraging and facilitating Christian professionals to represent Christ Jesus globally." The network includes about 20 member agencies, including Interserve, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, Overseas Missionary Fellowship and Arab World Ministries.

CTN defines tentmaking as "cross-cultural witness in which the Christian works in a host country using professional skills and qualifications among hard-to-reach people. The extensive personal contact with the local people provides the opportunity for tentmakers to incarnate Christ cross-culturally."

A tentmaker can be any Christian professional, "whether a truck driver or a doctor," says Henry Van Boxtel, CTN's national co-ordinator.

COURTESY HENRY VAN BOXTEL

Henry Van Boxtel, of the Canadian Tentmaker Network.

Like Interserve, CTN focuses on countries besides Canada. "We encourage people to work in limited-access countries," — especially North Africa, the Middle East and certain Asian countries, says Van Boxtel.

CTN helps potential tentmakers with networking, resources, training and mentoring, education and encouragement. It also helps co-ordinate special training events for tentmakers. In October, CTN held a one-day tentmaker conference at Tyndale College and Seminary in Toronto, and in November, CTN co-sponsored with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship a conference called "His World, Our Workplace — Integrity in the Workplace," also held at Tyndale.

In addition to his work with CTN, Van Boxtel recently has taken on responsibilities with an agency called TMQ Research. That agency is run by Don Hamilton, who wrote a book called *Tentmakers Speak* in 1985.

"The work of TMQ Research as an organization has served in the preparation of tentmakers for almost 15 years," explains Van Boxtel. "Over the past months I have been in conversation with Don Hamilton and a tentmaker based in Asia named Patrick Lai. Patrick is a U.S. tentmaker working in Asia who has surveyed a thousand tentmakers trying to determine, among other things, what are the ingredients for successful tentmaking. This is similar to what Don Hamilton did back in the '80s. Out of this new effort should come some new information and direction for the tentmaker movement. A book that would in effect follow *Tentmakers Speak* is in the works....

"Hamilton and Lai have asked me to be the North American Director for TMQ Research," explains Van Boxtel. "I think it fits well with my role as CTN national co-ordinator and should bring value to the movement as a whole."

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News Digest

10 Commandments for everyone

IDAHO (Religion Today) — An Idaho man is on a quest to give everyone in the world a copy of the Ten Commandments. Gerry Mahn began 13 years ago on the seemingly impossible task of delivering four to six billion copies of the biblical rules in any language needed to the entire world's population, according to the *Spokesman-Review* in Spokane.

His group is called Law by Choice for Freedom, and is composed of "just common people," Mahn said. It has its own printing press, and so far members have delivered 1.3 million copies of the Commandments. The group delivers posters of the Commandments in the U.S., and Mahn has taken his vision to Russia, Brazil, the Philippines, Nicaragua, Panama, and Peru.

A statistic in a newspaper in 1987 motivated Mahn's quest when he read that, among 55,000 people 16 or younger, 46,000 had never heard of the Ten Commandments.

Mexican wrestling priests

NUEVO LAREDO, Mexico (AP) — Fray Tormenta, or Brother Storm, has spent much of the last 25 years wrestling to raise money for charity. "The blows are hard," says Tormenta, whose real name is Father Sergio Gutierrez. "Even though I'm a priest, I've suffered a broken nose, a couple of broken ribs, and ankle and an arm."

He uses proceeds from his wrestling matches to help fund the 200-bed home for underprivileged boys he opened 15 years ago in Tulancingo. Now, Tormenta is training a younger man to be his wrestling "novice." Professional wrestling has been popular in low-income neighborhoods in Mexico since the 1950s.

Christmas beers

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — One unusual Christmas gift which has a long history is Christmas beer. According to *St. Catharines Standard* columnist Kimberley Lee, the first Christmas beer dates back to medieval times, when monks created a special brew to honor Christ's birth.

These seasonal beers "often have a dark color to echo our long winter nights," writes Lee. "They often have an aroma reminiscent of fruitcake, nutmeg, cinnamon or nuts; ingredients that historically were used sparingly and only at festive times."